



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



WEDNESDAY — 13 APR 2022

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HEADLINE	04/13 Shanghai: punishment lockdown violators
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/china/shanghai-warns-covid-lockdown-violators-will-be-punished-cases-hit-25000-2022-04-13/
GIST	<p>SHANGHAI, April 13 (Reuters) - China's commercial capital, Shanghai, warned on Wednesday that anyone who violates COVID-19 lockdown rules will be dealt with strictly, while also rallying citizens to defend their city as its tally of new cases rebounded to more than 25,000.</p> <p>The city police department spelled out the restrictions that most of the 25 million residents are facing and called on them to "fight the epidemic with one heart ... and work together for an early victory".</p> <p>"Those who violate the provisions of this notice will be dealt with in strict accordance with the law by public security organs ... If it constitutes a crime, they will be investigated according to law," the department said in a statement.</p> <p>The financial hub is under huge pressure to try to contain China's biggest COVID outbreak since the coronavirus was first discovered in the city of Wuhan, some 800 km (500 miles) to the west, in late 2019.</p> <p>Shanghai police also warned increasingly frustrated residents, millions of whom are confined to their homes and struggling to get daily supplies, not to spread false information or forge road passes or other clearance certificates.</p> <p>Residents battling to secure delivery slots for their food are also facing surging prices which the government is keen to keep a lid on.</p> <p>Peng Wenhao, an official with Shanghai's market supervision bureau, told reporters that authorities had issued 38,000 letters of warning against price gouging and was also investigating complaints of irregular pricing on social media.</p> <p>"If illegal acts like price gouging take place, it will be investigated and punished firmly and quickly," he said.</p> <p>Police also banned cars from the streets except for those involved in epidemic prevention or transporting people in need of emergency medical treatment.</p> <p>Shanghai's Dragon TV, run by the state-owned Shanghai Media Group, said it was cancelling a gala to mark the fight against COVID scheduled for broadcast on Wednesday, after the event drew a barrage of criticism on social media.</p> <p>Outraged members of the public had vented their anger over what they saw as a waste of resources in putting on the gala at a time of crisis. One accused the organisers of "showing off".</p> <p>'SIGNIFICANT DISRUPTION'</p> <p>Shanghai reported 25,141 new asymptomatic coronavirus cases for Tuesday, up from 22,348 a day earlier, and symptomatic cases also jumped to 1,189 from 994, city authorities said.</p> <p>Shanghai's COVID measures, which reflect China's strict "zero-COVID" approach aimed at eliminating transmission chains, have reverberated through the global economy, with analysts warning they were not only hurting tourism and hospitality but also having an impact on supply chains across sectors.</p>

Return to Top	<p>Imports last month fell for the first time since August 2020, data showed on Wednesday, with COVID curbs hampering freight arrivals and weakening demand.</p> <p>"The widespread lockdown and tighter zero-COVID restrictions in several cities around Shanghai have caused significant supply disruptions with transport and logistics under severe pressures," Barclays Bank economist Jian Chang said in a note.</p> <p>At least 11 Taiwanese companies, mostly making parts for electronics, said on Wednesday they were suspending production because of the disruption from China's COVID controls.</p> <p>Chang said the economic and supply pressures "likely have speeded up the transition towards a gradual and cautious exist from zero-COVID".</p> <p>The Caixin media group reported that Shanghai was one of eight cities involved in a pilot scheme launched on Monday to lower centralised quarantine requirements from 14 to 10 days, citing a government plan that has not been formally announced.</p> <p>A member of staff at a quarantine hotel in Xiamen city said the hotel had been selected for a 10-day quarantine trial, but staff at several other hotels in the city and one in Shanghai said they had not been notified of any change.</p> <p>Relevant authorities were not immediately available for comment on the report.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Taiwan issues official wartime handbook
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/taiwan-china-russia-ukraine/2022/04/12/id/1065471/
GIST	<p>Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense unveiled an official handbook at a Tuesday online press conference advising civilians on how to prepare for a potential invasion by China, France 24 reported.</p> <p>Ministry spokesman Sun Li-fang said the 28-page guide contains information "the general public can use as an emergency response guideline in a military crisis or natural disaster."</p> <p>The handbook is influenced by similar guides issued by Sweden and Japan, instructing residents on basic survival skills during air raids, massive fires, building collapses, power outages, and natural disasters.</p> <p>"The guide is for the public to better prepare themselves before a war or disaster happens," said the director of All-Out Defense Mobilization Agency Liu Tai-yi.</p> <p>"We hope the public can familiarize themselves where the safety shelters are beforehand," the official continued, commenting on how the handbook suggests phone apps that detail the nearest shelters.</p> <p>Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, concerns have developed over China taking advantage of the chaos to take Taiwan for themselves – an island the Communist Party has laid claim to since they took over the mainland in the 1940s.</p> <p>U.S. Admiral John Aquilino, leader of the Indo-Pacific Command, told the Financial Times last month that China has displayed unprecedented "boldness" in its posture against Taiwan over the past year, specifically citing hypersonic weapons tests done by the country last July.</p> <p>"I don't think anyone five months ago would have predicted an invasion of the Ukraine. So, I think the number one lesson is: 'Hey, this could really happen,'" Aquilino said to the outlet while visiting Australia. "Number two, don't be complacent... We have to be prepared at all times."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Russia installs puppet governments
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SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/russia-ukraine-war-regional-governments/2022/04/12/id/1065491/
GIST	<p>Russian forces have installed a puppet local government in the southern city of Enerhodar along the Dnieper River as well as the surrounding Zaporizhya region, local officials are claiming. The "government" is staging elections to replace the legitimately chosen representatives with Russian loyalists.</p> <p>After taking a month to capture Enerhodar, a self-proclaimed "Public Council of Self-Governance" gathered in the city's town square on April 6 and unanimously elected Andriy Shevchik, a city councilman who represented a pro-Russian party.</p> <p>"After being 'elected,' Shevchik 'fired' Dmitry Orlov, the democratically elected mayor of the town, as well as all other members of the local executive government," according to a statement from Enerhoatom, an agency that manages the nearby nuclear power plant, the largest in Europe.</p> <p>A day later, the local office of Ukrtelekom, a Ukrainian telephone monopoly, reportedly was raided, and necessary equipment to provide cellular service and internet access was stolen, a local news channel reported.</p> <p>"The city might be left without any internet or phone service," the station said.</p> <p>Six days after the "public council" assumed power, Ukraine's Zaporizhya Regional Military Administration claimed that businesses were not allowed to operate without expressed permission from the new government. Additionally, local media outlets were restricted in what they could and could not report about the war, and the outskirts of the city were fortified in case of a Ukrainian counter-offensive.</p> <p>"The occupiers are also carrying out raids of municipal service organizations to find men of conscription age and force them to enlist," the report said. "The occupiers are creating detachments of the so-called 'people's militia' with Ukrainian police, using intimidation and threats against them and their families."</p> <p>The General Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine claims intimidation is becoming increasingly common, such as the case it said included the wife of a Ukrainian soldier who was abducted and threatened.</p> <p>"There are many reports of Russian abductions of local law enforcement officers," added the General Prosecutor's Office.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Polish, Baltic presidents visit Ukraine
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-kyiv-business-europe-afc276faff040e7bf0b87b7625adbba8
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The presidents of four countries on Russia's doorstep visited Ukraine on Wednesday in a show of support for the embattled country, after Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed to continue his bloody offensive until its "full completion."</p> <p>The presidents of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia — all NATO countries that worry they may face Russian attack in the future if Ukraine falls — were traveling by train to Kyiv to meet Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy.</p> <p>In one of the most crucial battles of the war, Russia said more than 1,000 Ukrainian troops had surrendered in the besieged port of Mariupol, where Ukrainian forces have been holding out in pockets of the city. The information could not be verified.</p> <p>Russia invaded on Feb. 24 with the goal, according to Western officials, of taking Kyiv, toppling the government and installing a Moscow-friendly one. In the seven weeks since, the ground advance stalled, Russia has lost potentially thousands of fighters — and the war has forced millions of Ukrainians to flee, rattled the world economy, threatened global food supplies and shattered Europe's post-Cold War balance.</p>

U.S. President Joe Biden on Tuesday called Russia's actions in Ukraine "a genocide" for the first time, saying "Putin is just trying to wipe out the idea of even being a Ukrainian."

Zelenskyy applauded Biden's use of the word, saying "calling things by their names is essential to stand up to evil."

"We are grateful for US assistance provided so far and we urgently need more heavy weapons to prevent further Russian atrocities," he added in his tweet.

The European leaders visiting Ukraine planned to deliver "a strong message of political support and military assistance." Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda said.

Nausėda, Estonian President Alar Karis, Poland's Andrzej Duda and Egils Levits of Latvia also planned to discuss investigations into alleged Russian war crimes, including the massacre of civilians.

Putin has denied his troops committed atrocities, and on Tuesday insisted Russia "had no other choice" but to invade, saying the offensive aimed to protect people in parts of eastern Ukraine and to "ensure Russia's own security." He vowed it would "continue until its full completion and the fulfillment of the tasks that have been set."

He insisted Russia's campaign was going as planned despite a major withdrawal after its forces failed to take the capital and suffered significant losses.

Following those setbacks, Russian troops are now gearing up for a major offensive in the eastern Donbas region, where Russian-allied separatists and Ukrainian forces have been fighting since 2014, and where Russia has recognized the separatists' claims of independence. Military strategists say Moscow believes local support, logistics and the terrain in the region favor its larger, better-armed military, potentially allowing Russia to finally turn the tide in its favor.

Britain's defense ministry said Wednesday that "an inability to cohere and coordinate military activity has hampered Russia's invasion to date." Western officials say Russia recently appointed a new top general for the war, Alexander Dvornikov, to try to get a grip on its campaign.

A key piece to that campaign is Mariupol, which lies in the Donbas and which the Russians have besieged and pummeled since nearly the start of the war. Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podoliak tweeted that the city's defenders were short of supplies but were "fighting under the bombs for each meter of the city."

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj.-Gen. Igor Konashenkov said 1,026 troops from the Ukrainian 36th Marine Brigade had surrendered in the city. It was unclear when this occurred or how many forces were still defending Mariupol.

According to the BBC, Aiden Aslin, a British man fighting in the Ukrainian military in Mariupol, called his mother and a friend to say he and his comrades were out of food, ammunition and other supplies and would surrender.

Another Zelenskyy adviser Oleksiy Arestovych did not comment on the surrender claim, but said in a post on Twitter that elements of the same brigade managed to link up with other Ukrainian forces in the city as a result of a "risky maneuver."

Ukraine is investigating a claim that a drone dropped a poisonous substance on the city. The assertion by the Azov Regiment, a far-right group now part of the Ukrainian military, could not be independently verified. The regiment indicated there were no serious injuries.

Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar said it was possible phosphorus munitions — which cause horrendous burns but are not classed as chemical weapons — had been used in Mariupol, which has been pummeled by weeks of Russian assaults.

Deliberately firing phosphorus munitions into an enclosed space to expose people to fumes could breach the Chemical Weapons Convention, said Marc-Michael Blum, a former laboratory head at the Netherlands-based Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Western officials warned that any use of chemical weapons by Russia would be a serious escalation of the already devastating war. Zelenskyy said that while experts try to determine what the substance might be, “The world must react now.”

In Washington, a senior U.S. defense official said the Biden administration was preparing another package of military aid for Ukraine to be announced in the coming days, possibly totaling \$750 million. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss plans not yet publicly announced.

Biden used the word “genocide” about Russia’s actions during a visit to Iowa. He said it would be up to lawyers to decide if Russia’s conduct met the international standard for genocide, but said “it sure seems that way to me.”

Neither he nor his administration announced new consequences for Russia or assistance to Ukraine following the assessment.

An investigation into war crimes is already underway in Ukraine, including into atrocities revealed after Moscow’s retreat from cities and towns around Kyiv.

Zelenskyy said evidence of “inhuman cruelty” toward women and children in Bucha and other suburbs of Kyiv continued to surface, including alleged rapes.

More than 720 people were killed in Kyiv suburbs that had been occupied by Russian troops and over 200 were considered missing, the Interior Ministry said early Wednesday.

In Bucha alone, Mayor Anatoliy Fedoruk said 403 bodies had been found and the toll could rise as minesweepers comb the area.

Residents in Yahidne, a village near the northern city of Chernihiv, said Russian troops forced them to stay for almost a month in the basement of a school, only allowing them outside to go to the toilet, cook on open fires — and bury those who died in a mass grave.

In one of the rooms, the residents wrote the names of those who perished during the ordeal. The list counted 18 people.

“An old man died near me and then his wife died next,” said resident Valentyna Saroyan. “Then a man died who was lying there, then a woman sitting next to me. ... She died as well. Another old man looked so healthy, he was doing exercises, but then he was sitting and fell. That was it.”

Ukraine’s Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said humanitarian corridors used to get people out of cities under Russian attack will not operate on Wednesday because of poor security.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian officials detained fugitive Ukrainian oligarch Viktor Medvedchuk, who is both the former leader of a pro-Russian opposition party and a close associate of Putin. Medvedchuk was under house arrest before the war began and disappeared shortly after hostilities broke out.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Kids of Kremlin luxury lives in Europe, US
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/12/us/kremlin-kids-in-the-west-invs/index.html

(CNN)There is a world of private jets, posh Parisian apartments, Austrian ski vacations and schooling at elite universities in London and New York.

Their parents own prime real estate on the most exclusive avenues of Europe's capitals. Their social media profiles are filled with designer dresses and red-carpet events. One young woman posted photos of her 22nd birthday, poolside at the Adriatic Sea villa of one of Putin's oligarchs.

Meet the kids of the Kremlin.

While their parents publicly rail against the West, their kids grow up in the very countries whose societies they claim to reject.

"It is obviously extreme hypocrisy," said Daniel Treisman, a professor specializing in Russian politics at the University of California, Los Angeles.

"They may not even see a contradiction," Treisman said. "They believe that there's this competition between the US and Russia, but why should that affect their daughter's educational plans? Or where they have their chateaus?"

Putin himself blasted Russians who may "mentally" align with the West in a speech last month, accusing them of thinking they are part of a "higher race" and working with the "collective West" toward one goal: "the destruction of Russia."

"The Russian people will always be able to distinguish true patriots from scum and traitors and simply spit them out like a gnat that accidentally flew into their mouths," Putin said.

One of the first families of alleged Russian corruption and hypocrisy is that of Dmitry Peskov, Vladimir Putin's deputy chief of staff and chief spokesman -- a role that makes him Putin's loudest megaphone, one who on a near daily basis dispenses the Russian President's hardline vitriol against the West.

The United States recently sanctioned Peskov, his wife and two adult children (from two previous marriages), stating that the family lives "luxurious lifestyles that are incongruous with Peskov's civil servant salary and are likely built on the ill-gotten wealth of Peskov's connections to Putin." At least two of his children were largely raised in Western Europe before returning to Moscow as adults.

While the US Treasury didn't spell out the questionable excesses, Peskov -- who's held his role for nearly a decade and reportedly made \$173,000 in 2020 -- has been seen wearing a \$600,000 designer watch and went on a honeymoon that included a roughly \$430,000-a-week yacht off the coast of Sardinia, according to an investigation by the Anti-Corruption Foundation founded by jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

Based on property records, social media posts and traffic violation databases, the Anti-Corruption Foundation also revealed Peskov's wife, ex-wife and children own luxury vehicles and multimillion-dollar homes all over the world -- including Russia and France -- a display of riches in stark contrast with the nearly 20 million Russians living in poverty.

The staggering, yet seemingly inexplicable, wealth of such families in Putin's world, experts say, boils down to a single concept: kleptocracy.

"A kleptocracy is merely a government that is ruled by thieves," said Georgetown University professor Jodi Vittori, an expert on corruption and global policy, "where the policies and decisions made are on behalf of those thieves."

A complicated web of shell companies, offshore banks and hidden transactions often obscures their wealth, with accounts spirited away inside one another, making it complicated to trace where funds are coming from.

The wealth accumulated by Russian kleptocrats is frequently spent in Western economies.

"They want to live in the West because the richest countries in the world are in the West. The amazing centers of culture are in the West," said Treisman. "But in addition, Western countries have a much more secure rule of law than Russia. So, if they're able to get a lot of their money into the West, they can feel more secure."

The hypocrisy of Russian officials and their families enjoying the largesse of the West has been an open secret in Russia for years. In 2016, a bill was introduced to the State Duma banning the education of minor children of most of Russia's officials in foreign universities, claiming domestic education would be key to becoming true patriots. The bill didn't pass.

Peskov's 24-year-old daughter from his second marriage, Elizaveta Peskova -- whose racy social media posts have often become the fodder of Russian and European tabloids -- hasn't shied away from limelight or controversy, like when she reportedly told a Russian TV outlet that she feels "better in the European environment" and called Russia's education system a "true hell."

More recently, she contradicted her father's public statements by posting "no to war" to her Instagram stories, the slogan used by Russians opposing the war in Ukraine. The post was screenshotted and shared by the Russian outlet TV Rain, but was taken down quickly.

As a young child, Peskova reportedly attended the Ecole des Roches outside Paris -- where the annual tuition is about a fourth of her father's salary and extracurricular activities include aviation classes.

Peskova continued her Parisian education with an internship at Louis Vuitton and a marketing degree from a French business school. She even interned for the European Parliament.

According to the Anti-Corruption Foundation, Peskova and her mother bought a nearly \$2 million, 180-square-meter apartment in 2016 in one of Paris' most expensive neighborhoods, on Avenue Victor Hugo, squeezed between the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and the lush Bois de Boulogne. CNN has not confirmed the purchase.

Peskova's extravagance in France is paralleled by her half brother's in Russia. A 2017 investigation by Navalny's anti-corruption group found Nikolay Choles -- Peskov's eldest son who grew up in England -- traveled the world in private jets, owned prime real estate in Moscow and raced his fleet of luxury vehicles through the city racking up as many as 116 traffic violations, while reportedly unemployed.

"It certainly represents a high level of at least cynicism, if not outright hypocrisy," said Vittori, the Georgetown professor.

Peskova called the sanctions and the notion she is somehow enabling war "totally unfair and unfounded" and told Business Insider she's "upset" because the restrictions keep her from traveling. In a statement on Telegram, Peskova wrote she is "proud" to be Russian and that sanctioning adult children and "especially a girl" is "crazy." "There is hardly a fair trial," she added, "during such a witch hunt and frenzied hatred of everything Russian."

Peskova -- who, when reached by CNN, did not engage on the details of this story by the time of publication -- isn't the only Kremlin-connected child enjoying continental high society.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who called for a "post-West" world order in 2017, sent his daughter to prestigious universities in London and New York.

Even the daughter of Lavrov's purported girlfriend seemingly benefits from his influential position: She posted pictures of herself on the yacht, Austrian ski resort and beachside villa of a wealthy oligarch, according to the Anti-Corruption Foundation.

Polina Kovaleva -- who the UK government refers to as Lavrov's "stepdaughter" even though he's not officially married to her mother -- owns a \$5.8 million apartment in one of London's most expensive neighborhoods, according to recent sanctions imposed against her.

The Anti-Corruption Foundation revealed Kovaleva bought the Kensington apartment when she was 21 years old. The flat is walking distance to Imperial College, which she also attended.

Lavrov's much less visible daughter, Ekaterina Vinokurova, now 39 years old, attended Columbia University in New York, where she lived for 17 years, before obtaining her graduate degree at the London School of Economics. Both Kovaleva and Vinokurova were recently sanctioned by the United Kingdom.

"This sends a strong signal that those benefiting from association of those responsible for Russian aggression are in scope of our sanctions," UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss wrote in a news release announcing the sanctions against Kovaleva.

Putin himself is no exception to the hypocrisy of tough anti-Western rhetoric in the face of family members, or those close to him, taking advantage of what the West has to offer.

One of his purported partners, who allegedly bore him a daughter, became the owner of a \$4.1 million apartment in Monaco just weeks after the child was born, according an investigation by Russian independent media outlet Proekt, based on the so-called Pandora Papers.

His eldest daughter, Maria, reportedly married a Dutch businessman; the couple is said to have lived in a \$3.3 million apartment in the Netherlands. An eight-bedroom villa in Biarritz, France, linked to his younger daughter, Katerina -- the multimillion-dollar mansion was bought by her former husband, Kirill Shamalov, from Putin's longtime friend and billionaire Gennady Timchenko -- was recently raided by activists and offered as a safe house to Ukrainian refugees.

Both Putin's daughters were sanctioned by the United Kingdom and the United States last week.

Peskov called the new measures a "frantic tendency" by Washington to impose sanctions on Moscow. "Russia will respond without fail and will do so as it sees fit," he added.

Putin is rumored to have more children out of wedlock, all of who appear to have lived in Western countries. These reports have always been denied by the Kremlin.

Despite his own family members' connections to the West, Putin recently took aim at other Russians with "villas in Miami or the French Riviera, who cannot make do without foie gras, oysters or gender freedom as they call it."

The problem with such people, Putin said on March 16, is that they are "over there in their minds and not here with our people and with Russia."

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HEADLINE	04/13 UK cost of living soars; inflation hits 7%
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/apr/13/inflation-march-britain-cost-of-living-soars
GIST	<p>Households in Britain have come under renewed pressure from the soaring cost of living after the official inflation rate reached 7% last month amid a record increase in petrol and diesel prices.</p> <p>Figures from the Office for National Statistics showed the latest rise in the consumer prices index was the fastest in three decades, coming a month after the barometer for rising living costs jumped by 6.2% in February.</p>

With broad-based price rises across the economy, the biggest increase came in the cost of filling up at the pump after Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent the global oil price close to record levels amid concerns over supply disruption and sanctions.

Average petrol and diesel prices soared to record highs of 160.2p and 170.5p a litre respectively, rising by more than 30% over the past year – the biggest annual increase since 1989.

Restaurants and hotel prices also rose steeply in March, having been unavailable last year during lockdown, while there were also rises across a number of different types of food as the cost of a weekly shop increases.

The ONS said inflation was last higher in March 1992 when CPI stood at 7.1%.

Highlighting the intensity of the squeeze on living costs last month, City economists had forecast a rate of 6.7%. Further increases are expected as the impact of the war in Ukraine drives up the cost of energy and raw materials, with households likely to feel the squeeze from higher gas and electricity bills.

The Bank of England has warned that inflation is on track to reach 8% this month and could peak close to 10% later this year, the highest rate in four decades.

According to the latest snapshot, rising costs for gas and electricity bills added to pressure on household living costs in March. However, families are expected to face a bigger squeeze this month after a 54% rise in the Ofgem energy price cap to reflect an increase in wholesale markets, where oil and gas prices quadrupled in the past year even before Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The latest rise in inflation will not be the last," said Alpesh Paleja, the lead economist at the CBI business lobby group. "The result will be even higher costs for businesses, and a deep squeeze in the cost of living for households."

Official figures on Monday showed average pay growth failing to keep pace with the soaring cost of living. Jack Leslie, a senior economist at the Resolution Foundation, said the cost of living crisis was on track to be the biggest squeeze since the mid-1970s.

"The sheer scale of this inflation-led squeeze on living standards makes it all the more remarkable how little support the chancellor provided in his spring statement – a decision that will surely have to be revisited before the autumn budget."

The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, blamed the rising costs on global pressures in supply chains and energy markets that could be made worse by Russian aggression in Ukraine.

"I know this is a worrying time for many families, which is why we are taking action to ease the burdens by providing support worth around £22bn in this financial year, including for the most vulnerable through our household support fund," he said. "We're also helping as many people as possible into work – the best way for families to gain economic security in the longer term."

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HEADLINE	04/13 Russia oil industry feels sting Ukraine war
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-oil-industry-linchpin-of-economy-feels-sting-of-ukraine-war-disruptions-11649843249?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	Oil is backing up through Russia's energy supply chain and leading to a drop in crude-oil production, a blow to Moscow's main economic engine as the war in Ukraine rages .

Refiners are trimming output and in some cases closing down because of falling demand at home and abroad. Storage space is running low in pipelines and tanks. Wells, which pump from some of the world's biggest crude reserves, are dialing down production.

The losses so far are modest, and overall the industry continues [to generate massive amounts of revenue for Moscow](#). But the problems of getting crude from the ground to end users are likely to mount in the coming months, traders and analysts say.

In the latest indication of problems ahead, the International Energy Agency forecast Wednesday that from May, almost 3 million barrels a day in Russian production will be turned off. That would reduce output to fewer than 9 million barrels a day, a larger pullback than other analysts have predicted.

The degree to which Russian output suffers depends on Moscow's ability [to find new buyers in Asia](#). Customers in the U.S. are steering clear and many of those in Europe are seeking alternative suppliers. The IEA said there was no indication yet that China is racing to import barrels being shunned by longtime buyers of Russian oil.

A sustained drop would undermine the prime driver of Russian growth just as [sanctions](#) are set to [pitch the economy into a steep recession](#). "There is the risk you permanently lose some production potential," said Helge André Martinsen, senior oil analyst at [DNB Markets](#).

Moscow has a lot riding on its oil-and-gas producers navigating the crisis. Revenues from Russia's oil and gas sales made up 45% of the federal budget in 2021, according to the International Energy Agency. Russia will earn \$12.1 billion from the oil it exported in March, the Institute of International Finance estimates.

Trouble struck Russia's refining industry within days of the invasion, traders say. Overseas sales shrank when [European importers sought alternative suppliers](#). The U.S. then [banned Russian oil imports in early March](#).

Unable to find enough buyers for diesel, gasoline and other such products, Russia started running out of places to put them, prompting refiners to run at a slower pace. About 1.7 million barrels a day in refinery production were offline in the week through April 8, said Richard Joswick, head of oil analytics at S&P Global Commodity Insights. That is 70% more capacity offline than typical levels of inactivity during the spring maintenance season.

Among those to shut down having exhausted storage is TAIF-NK PSC, based in Tatarstan in western Russia, traders said. The company didn't respond to requests for comment.

The chief executive of [Lukoil](#) PJSC, Russia's second-largest oil company, wrote to Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak in late March to say storage was brimming with oil, according to a report by Russian newspaper Kommersant. CEO Vagit Alekperov asked to redirect fuel oil to power plants to avoid shutting refiners, according to the report.

A Lukoil spokesperson didn't respond to requests for comment.

A decline in Russia's refining industry would have [big implications for the oil market](#). Before the war, Russia was the third-largest oil producer, after the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. It was the world's biggest exporter, shipping 5 million barrels of crude and a related fuel known as condensate a day, alongside 2.9 million a day of refined products, especially diesel.

Europe is particularly dependent on Russian diesel and prices there leaped after the invasion. The rise added to existing pressures on consumers and businesses, and prompted governments in the U.K., France and elsewhere to reduce sales taxes for road fuels.

The U.S. and allies have agreed to [release more than 100 million barrels from government reserves](#) to curtail the runup in energy prices. The plan, combined with Covid-19 lockdowns in China, has quelled wild [moves in energy markets that erupted after the invasion](#). Brent, the international benchmark, traded at \$105.09 a barrel Wednesday, down 6.7% from a month earlier.

Difficulties in the refining industry are reversing through the energy industry and hurting Russia's ability to produce crude—thick, black oil that hasn't been processed into usable fuels.

The space to store oil appears to be dwindling in the state-owned [Transneft PJSC](#) pipeline network as less crude flows into refiners, traders and analysts say. Measuring how much crude is housed in the network is difficult. Many storage tanks in Russia have fixed or covered roofs, or are underground, so satellites can't calculate the oil inside them by tracking the height of the roof, Mr. Joswick said.

A Transneft spokesperson didn't immediately respond to request for comment.

With fewer places for their crude to go, Russian producers are cutting back. Output of crude and condensate has fallen to 10.5 million barrels a day, said Amrita Sen, co-founder of Energy Aspects. That is down from 11.1 million barrels a day before the Feb. 24 invasion and compares with global oil demand of roughly 100 million barrels a day.

If maintained through April, current losses would take Russian crude production back to levels from July 2021—before a series of output increases by OPEC+ designed to meet demand as it recovered from Covid-19, according to Lambert Energy Advisory.

It is too early to tell whether Russia's energy industry will suffer lasting damage, analysts say. There are signs the country is adapting fast to lost demand in the West, sending more shipments of crude to Turkey and India among other countries.

Oil producers in Russia have recovered from setbacks in the past.

Output almost halved between 1987 and 1996 during the disintegration of the Soviet Union, according to a book on Russian oil by Thane Gustafson. Russia returned to the top table of oil-market players when Mikhail Khodorkovsky's Yukos and Roman Abramovich's Sibneft applied Western production and management techniques in the 2000s.

Still, sliding demand from Western companies adds to a separate challenge for giants [Rosneft Oil Co.](#) and Gazprom PJSC and their smaller rivals: [Access to funding, machinery and parts](#).

Simpler components can be manufactured domestically or sourced from China. But some catalysts and sensors used in refineries are largely manufactured by U.S. and European companies, leading to concerns about not being able to access parts to keep refineries operating, said a person familiar with the Russian oil industry.

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HEADLINE	04/13 Russia focuses south, east Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-forces-renew-focus-on-southern-and-eastern-ukraine-11649842020?mod=hp_lead_pos8
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine—Russian forces launched airstrikes on Ukrainian positions inside the besieged city of Mariupol early Wednesday, a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin said peace talks with Kyiv had reached a dead end, as troops from both sides exchanged fire ahead of an expected uptick in violence.</p> <p>Russia is redeploying troops from around the Kyiv area, where its initial attempt to take the capital failed, to southern and eastern Ukraine, where it made early gains in the first weeks of the invasion. Ukraine has used the lull in fighting to boost appeals to the West for more weapons and sanctions on Russia as several European leaders are expected to visit Kyiv on Wednesday.</p>

Ukrainian forces destroyed several Russian military targets and shot down a Su-25 aircraft, Ukraine's General Staff said.

Russian troops shelled civilian targets in the northeastern city of Kharkiv and the southern city of Zaporizhzhia, which has become a center for refugees from the nearby port city of Mariupol, the General Staff said. Russian attacks have concentrated on the Azovstal steelworks, near the port on the Sea of Azov, where Ukrainian forces have been fighting for weeks.

Russian focus on Mariupol has remained steady as forces have worked to establish full control over the city to establish a land corridor from occupied regions in the east to the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014. Troop movements in the city overnight centered on Ukraine's 36th Marine Brigade, the fate of which was unclear after conflicting accounts between officials in Moscow and Kyiv.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said the unit had managed to break out of Russian encirclement in the city to join another Ukrainian unit, the Azov regiment, which has been fighting off Russian attacks on Azovstal for weeks. Ukrainian media on Tuesday cited an unnamed officer of the brigade as saying that several hundred of its members had managed to escape.

In a post to its Facebook page on April 11, the brigade said it had all but run out of ammunition despite promises from officials and was collapsing under the strain of Russia's offensive.

"For more than a month the marines have fought without supplies of ammunition, without food, without water, almost drinking from puddles and dying en masse. The mountain of wounded amounts to almost half the brigade," the brigade said in the post. "Today there will most likely be a final battle."

On Wednesday, Russia's Defense Ministry said 1,026 service members of the brigade, including 162 officers, had surrendered to Russian forces. Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said 151 wounded servicemen had been taken to the Mariupol city hospital.

Gen. Konashenkov also said that Russian aviation had struck 46 military targets overnight, including a radar station near the village of Borovoe in the Kharkiv region and two Ukrainian weapons depots in the Zhytomyr and Kyiv regions. He said four Ukrainian helicopters had been destroyed at a military airfield in the Poltava region in the eastern part of the country.

Around the northern suburbs of Kyiv, Ukrainian authorities planned the exhumation of mass graves left following weeks of Russian occupation. Authorities have identified and examined the bodies of more than 720 civilians killed in the Kyiv region, the Interior Ministry said. More than 200 people are missing, according to the ministry.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said authorities were collecting more witness testimony and information about war crimes, which he said would help in carrying out an [investigation into what happened in Bucha](#) and elsewhere in the region.

"We will establish the full truth about all these savages," said Mr. Zelensky in an address early Wednesday.

President Biden called Mr. Putin's actions in Ukraine genocide, and is expected to announce as early as Wednesday an additional \$750 million in military and other support for Ukraine, which would bring U.S. aid to more than \$2 billion since Russia's invasion began, according to senior U.S. military officials. The new package would include Mi-17 helicopters and sea drones Ukrainian officials said they need to defend against the Russian forces.

"We are grateful for U.S. assistance provided so far and we urgently need more heavy weapons to prevent further Russian atrocities," Mr. Zelensky wrote on Twitter.

	<p>The leaders of Poland and the Baltic states were expected to arrive in Kyiv to meet with Mr. Zelensky as the U.S. and Europe discuss measures to support the Ukrainians against the Russian invasion.</p> <p>Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said no humanitarian corridors would be opened on Wednesday, and that Russian soldiers were blocking buses in violation of cease-fire agreements meant to allow for the transport of humanitarian aid and people in and out of occupied territories in Ukraine's eastern Luhansk and southern Zaporizhzhia regions.</p> <p>"All of this creates such a level of danger on the routes that we are forced to refrain from opening humanitarian corridors today," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Ukraine war: global economy problem
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/04/13/ukraine-russia-war-global-economy-recession/
GIST	<p>With no sign of an early end to the war in Ukraine, the risk is growing that the conflict will tip a fragile global economy into a slump.</p> <p>In its first seven weeks, the war has already triggered massive Ukrainian refugee flows, boosted inflation by driving up prices on food and oil, and dented prospects for European growth.</p> <p>U.S. and allied financial sanctions designed to punish Moscow have put a chokehold on the Russian economy, sparking an exodus by hundreds of multinational companies and pushing the government to the brink of its first default on foreign-currency debt since the Bolshevik Revolution.</p> <p>With U.S. and NATO officials warning that the fighting in Ukraine could continue for months or even years, a greater economic toll looms.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the World Trade Organization slashed this year's growth forecast to 2.8 percent from 4.1 percent before the war, saying the conflict had inflicted "a severe blow" on the world economy.</p> <p>Gregory Daco, chief economist for Ernst & Young, said a lengthy war — and a further increase of allied sanctions on Russia — could strip up to two percentage points off global growth.</p> <p>Wall Street economists expect the global economy to expand by 3.5 percent this year, according to an April survey by Bloomberg, down from 4 percent in March.</p> <p>"The longer this situation goes on, the more significant the erosion becomes," Daco said.</p> <p>Despite Moscow's repeated threats earlier this year to act against Kyiv, the Feb. 24 invasion surprised government leaders, business executives and economists who had expected 2022 to be a year of recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, they find themselves grappling with a major European conflict that appears likely to be protracted.</p> <p>Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Congress earlier this month that combat in Ukraine would be "measured in years." NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg and White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan have offered similar comments in recent days.</p> <p>As worries mount about the war's economic consequences, combat in Ukraine is expected to intensify. Russian forces are massing for an anticipated assault in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russian separatists have battled Ukrainian government forces for several years.</p> <p>On Sunday, the World Bank warned that "the war has added to mounting concerns about a sharp global slowdown."</p>

The battlefield overlaps with some of the globe's most important cropland. Ukraine and Russia combined account for one-quarter of world wheat exports, according to the World Bank.

Protracted fighting in Ukraine could interrupt the annual cycle of sowing and reaping on Ukrainian farms, disrupting the global food trade beyond the end of 2022. Already, at least 20 percent of Ukraine's planted wheat "may not be harvested due to direct destruction, constrained access or a lack of resources to harvest crops," the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization said last week.

The U.N. agency cut its forecast for the global cereals trade to 469 million tons, down 14.6 million tons from its March estimate, citing the interruption of exports from Ukraine and Russia. Lower trade volumes will crimp food imports across much of the Middle East and North Africa, raising concerns over hunger and political instability.

The war's impact comes as the global economy's two main engines — the United States and China — confront their own problems. China's zero-tolerance coronavirus policy is upending supply chains and raising doubts about the government's 5.5 percent growth target.

In the United States, the Federal Reserve is struggling to cool off the highest inflation in 40 years. By driving up oil prices and consumers' expectations of price increases, the war is making it more likely that the Fed will aggressively hike rates, increasing recession risks, said Mark Zandi, chief economist of Moody's Analytics.

"The fallout of the Russian invasion on the U.S. economy has become meaningfully more problematic," Zandi wrote in a note to clients on Monday.

The war and subsequent sanctions also have done unexpected damage to global trade flows. Russia and Ukraine together account for less than 3 percent of global exports. But the hostilities have complicated supply chains by raising shipping and insurance costs in the Black Sea region, according to a new World Bank study of the war's effects.

After more than two years of chronic supply chain havoc, the war has become one more headache for the automotive, petrochemicals, agricultural and construction industries, the bank said.

Another casualty of the war could be the body that coordinates the global response to major downturns, the Group of 20 nations. Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen last week said Russia should be expelled from the G-20 over its invasion of Ukraine, adding that the United States would boycott the organization's meetings if Russian officials attended.

Indonesia, which is hosting this year's summit, has said Russia remains welcome.

The first test of the U.S. stance could come on April 20, when G-20 finance ministers and central bank officials are scheduled to gather in Washington. Along with the United States, the group includes the European Union, Canada, Japan, China and developing countries such as Brazil and South Africa.

"Since the 2008 financial crisis, the G-20 has been the most important stabilizing force in the global economy," said Josh Lipsky, director of the Atlantic Council's GeoEconomics Center. "It's a very important coordinating body."

Russia has largely weathered the sanctions' initial effects, with the ruble rebounding from its initial 40 percent plunge to nearly regain its prewar value, helped by the imposition of controls on the movement of funds in and out of Russia. The Russian central bank last week dropped its main interest rate to 17 percent after doubling it to 20 percent to defend the ruble.

The cut suggests Russian authorities feel they can afford to lower their defenses around the ruble and make credit more affordable so that companies can invest and hire.

“They’ve managed to put out the first fires — the bank runs and potential collapse of the financial system. Now, they’re switching to support growth,” said Elina Ribakova, deputy chief economist for the Institute of International Finance. “But there is only so much the central bank can do.”

Indeed, the country is headed for a deep downturn and cracks are appearing in its financial foundation. S&P Global Ratings late Friday said the Russian government was in “selective default” on its U.S. dollar-denominated bonds after making interest and principal payments on April 4 in rubles.

The Treasury Department — in a tightening of U.S. sanctions — blocked U.S. banks from receiving a dollar payment from Russia. The department initially said U.S. investors could accept dollar payments on Russian debt until May 25.

Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov told the Russian newspaper Izvestia that his government will not issue any new bonds this year, fearing the required interest rate would be “cosmic,” and planned legal action if forced into default.

S&P said it did not expect the Russian government to meet its payment obligations within the 30-day grace period because “sanctions on Russia are likely to be further increased.”

As the war grinds on, reports of atrocities by Russian soldiers are drawing calls for a tougher allied response.

Europe’s payments for Russian energy products represent a lifeline for Russian President Vladimir Putin, replenishing the hard currency reserves that sanctions squeezed.

Reflecting soaring oil and gas prices, Russia’s central bank said Monday that the surplus in the country’s account — the broadest trade measure — rose to \$58.2 billion in the first quarter. That was the largest figure since 1994, and more than twice the \$22.5 billion reported in the same period last year.

E.U. officials are meeting today to discuss potential steps to reduce the financial flows to Moscow, even as Germany and other nations that are heavily dependent upon Russia for energy remain reluctant. About half of Russia’s 6 million barrels per day of oil exports last year went to Europe.

“We have imposed massive sanctions already but more needs to be done on the energy sector, incl oil,” Josep Borrell, the E.U.’s top diplomat, tweeted over the weekend.

Any initial move would probably involve a phased reduction in purchases from Russia, according to Daniel Tannebaum, a partner at Oliver Wyman in New York, who advises financial institutions on sanctions.

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HEADLINE	04/13 Ukraine pilots; better equipped Russians
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/13/ukrainian-fighter-pilots-mig-29-russians/
GIST	<p>ODESSA, Ukraine — The fighter pilot known as “Juice” usually just has a few minutes to scramble. When he’s on-call, which is pretty much always these days, he can’t be more than a bathroom break away from his cockpit. When a cruise missile or a Russian fighter is spotted moving toward the area Juice is assigned to by the Ukrainian Air Force, he doesn’t even have time to run through standard safety checks before taking off.</p> <p>“We’re ready to be killed,” said Juice, who provided only his call sign for security reasons.</p> <p>“But we don’t want this of course,” the 29-year-old added. “We want to kill Russians and take down their bombers that are killing our cities and our families.”</p>

Juice is one of the pilots helping Ukraine pull off the biggest surprise of this war: Its military has kept the airspace over Ukraine contested despite Russia's more advanced jets and superior numbers. But he and other pilots say that's not enough. While Kyiv's forces have perhaps even outperformed Moscow's on the ground, Russia has continued to inflict heavy losses on Ukraine from the sky.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has appealed to the United States and other NATO allies to establish a no-fly zone over the country — a step leaders in the military alliance refused to take, citing fears of touching off a world war with Moscow. Now Zelensky is pushing for more advanced air-defense systems and jets.

But Juice and others have said the weapons that countries have discussed transferring to Ukraine — particularly Russian-made MiG-29 fighters and U.S.-made Stinger antiaircraft missiles — won't help Kyiv's Air Force tip the scales in its favor. The gap between the weapons Ukraine wants and what Western countries are willing to supply has become a key tension nearly two months into the fighting.

Nowhere is that divide more evident than in the proposed air materiel transfers. Juice flies MiG-29s, which are a Soviet-era staple of the Ukrainian Air Force. But he said Ukrainian pilots are "just targets" for Russian adversaries who fly far more advanced jets. Obtaining more outdated MiGs would not improve Ukraine's position in the skies, he said.

"We have losses almost everyday in our Air Force," he added. "You won't see this on TV because everything is classified right now, but actually we have a lot of losses. That's why we need to be technically equal with the Russians. Just our mental advantage is not enough to fight with these technologies."

Poland last month offered to send a number of MiG-29 jets to Ukraine via a U.S. air base in Germany, blindsiding U.S. officials. In exchange, Poland requested that the United States send it replacement planes, presumably newer U.S.-manufactured F-16s, which would constitute a major upgrade. Washington rejected the plan.

Then on Monday, Slovakian Prime Minister Eduard Heger told reporters that Slovakia will consider providing Ukraine MiG-29 fighters if alternative protection of its own airspace can be arranged.

But for Ukrainian pilots, more MiG-29s aren't the answer. The jets Poland offered to transfer them are even older — some date back to the late '80s — than their current stock.

"I think the Ukrainians are right — you're basically a target in the air if you don't have any of that modern capability," said Herbert "Hawk" Carlisle, a retired U.S. Air Force general. "It's not just an airplane up there. You have to have all of that sophisticated equipment on it to make it really a viable air platform."

Countries have proposed sending Ukrainians MiG-29s in large part because that's what the country's pilots already know how to fly. If they received F-16s, Carlisle said, it's not just the pilots who would have to learn a flight system he described as "significantly different" from Soviet-style jets; personnel on the ground would have to train on how maintain the aircraft and load them with compatible munitions.

But Juice and another Ukrainian pilot, whose call sign is "Nomad," said the learning curve isn't as substantial as it's often made out to be. Nomad, who is in the United States as part of a training program, said it would probably take Ukrainians about two weeks to learn the nuances of the U.S.-made F-series planes.

Many of the pilots already speak English and have participated in joint exercises with the U.S. Air Force, so they're familiar with the terminology of those planes' systems, they said.

The pilots were also critical of the effectiveness of Stinger antiaircraft missiles, which have been part of U.S. aid packages. Nomad said that "it's almost impossible" to hit an agile, fast-moving Russian jet with

	<p>the missiles. Carlisle agreed, adding that Stingers aren't designed to take down fighters — they're intended to be used against helicopters and other slow-moving, low-flying aircraft.</p> <p>If Western countries are hesitant to give Ukraine modern jets its pilots haven't trained on, Juice said they should at least consider sending more advanced air-defense systems. He said those are much easier to learn how to operate.</p> <p>Military analysts expected Russia to wipe out Ukraine's air-defense systems, airfields and aircraft on the very first day of the war, when Moscow still had the element of surprise. But Rob Lee, an expert on the Russian military and a senior fellow with the Foreign Policy Research Institute, said Russia "didn't really go for a death blow," and in some cases, their missiles hit the airfield but missed the runway.</p> <p>Ukrainian pilots were able to improvise from there. Juice said the fight in the sky doesn't feel fair when he's going up against a more modern Russian jet. He often has to just avoid his adversary entirely to stay alive. Sometimes he and his fellow pilots manage to trick the Russians into flying into an area where the Ukrainians have an air-defense system ready and waiting.</p> <p>Analysts at the Oryx Blog, which tracks Russian military losses, documented 20 aircraft and 30 helicopters destroyed or damaged in Ukraine.</p> <p>"We are just trying to do something nonstandard, and sometimes it's successful and sometimes it's not," Juice said. "Sometimes they're just stupid and Russians are just showing their incompetence and underestimating our training.</p> <p>"But in general, we cannot gain a real air superiority, unfortunately."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Incarcerated firefighters struggle to get job
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/bvnk4q/incarcerated-firefighters-california
GIST	<p>There's no such thing as the California wildfire season anymore. Now there's just the California wildfire year.</p> <p>This past January, during what would typically be the wettest, least fire-prone time of year, a massive blaze swept through Big Sur, scorching nearly 700 acres of coastal terrain. The National Weather Service called it "pretty surreal fire behavior."</p> <p>Needless to say, firefighters who can combat these blazes are in high demand. To supplement their professional crews, Western states have long relied on incarcerated labor to help fight wildfires. In California, incarcerated men and women are deployed from dozens of "fire camps" to build fire breaks and provide other mission-critical services, like clearing brush, and sometimes battling blazes directly. On some wildfires, more than half the firefighters wear orange jumpsuits that identify them as incarcerated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.</p> <p>It's not surprising that some of them would think about firefighting as a career once they are released from prison—after all, they've already been doing the work. Yet there are numerous obstacles to finding second-chance employment on professional firefighting crews.</p> <p>The Forestry and Fire Recruitment Program set out to change that, and since 2015 it has guided formerly incarcerated people who served in fire camps through the red tape, and into full-time jobs at state and local fire departments.</p> <p>"I was one of those individuals," says FFRP co-founder Royal Ramey of his own journey from incarceration to fighting fires for a living. "I had limited resources and options for employment when I came home."</p>

	<p>It took a few years after his release, but eventually Ramey did get hired on a California fire crew. He found himself working on fire lines alongside some of the very same people he'd been incarcerated with. They recognized him and began asking questions about how he had made the transition from an incarcerated firefighter to a professional one. Soon after, he and another formerly incarcerated firefighter named Brandon Smith began what would become the FFRP.</p> <p>Now, the FFRP runs training and job assistance programs, as well as helping formerly incarcerated Californians earn the certifications they'll need to be hired onto fire crews.</p> <p>Yet even more than the training and certifications, Ramey says his organization offers a path to building a new sense of self, guided by others who have surmounted similar hurdles as they re-enter society after incarceration.</p> <p>"So I think a lot of folks that have been in prison have some type of trauma that they are dealing with," says Ramey. "But then coming to the FFRP, we can be able to give you that hands-on support and understanding of like, 'I've been where you've been. I understand how you feel.'"</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Kent police officers make 19.2% more 2022
SOURCE	https://www.kentreporter.com/news/kent-police-officers-make-19-2-more-this-year-than-in-2019/
GIST	<p>The annual salaries for Kent Police officers, sergeants, commanders and assistant chiefs are 19.2% higher in 2022 than 2019 under a new three-year labor agreement.</p> <p>The Kent City Council unanimously approved April 5 a new contract with the Kent Police Officers Association for officers and sergeants as well as a separate contract with the union for commanders and assistant chiefs.</p> <p>"I am very pleased with the outcome of the contracts," said Kent Mayor Dana Ralph after the council gave her approval to sign the new labor agreements. "They provide us with an additional tool to attract and retain top quality officers."</p> <p>The council approved most of the pay hike in October 2021 when it gave officers an early 16% increase in advance of the new three-year contract that runs through Dec. 31, 2024. The prior three-year agreement expired Dec. 31, 2021.</p> <p>Although the Kent Police Department has a budget for 165 officers, staffing has been about 20 officers short due to resignations, retirements and a lack of new hires.</p> <p>Police Chief Rafael Padilla and city leaders hope the higher pay leads to better staffing.</p> <p>An officer hired but still in the police academy will receive \$81,660 per year in 2022 compared to \$68,520 in 2019. By their fifth year, that officer will make \$106,308 per year compared to \$89,208 in 2019. The pay for sergeants jumped to \$127,656 per year from \$107,136.</p> <p>Commanders (seven on the current list) will get \$157,704 per year in 2022 compared to \$132,348 in 2019. The three assistant chiefs will get \$186,096 per year compared to \$156,580 in 2019.</p> <p>That includes \$15,508 per month to Assistant Chief Derek Kammerzell, who remains on paid administrative leave after Mayor Ralph asked the police union for his resignation in January for posting a Nazi insignia on his office door. Negotiations between the city and police union over Kammerzell's status have yet to be resolved.</p> <p>The 16% hike cost the city about \$700,000 in 2021 and will cost about \$2.8 million in 2022 from the city general fund and criminal justice fund, according to Padilla.</p>

	<p>Under the labor agreement, officers assigned to certain units receive a pay of 4% above their base pay. That includes the Special Investigations Unit, Special Operations Unit, K-9, traffic, Valley SWAT, Neighborhood Response Team, School Resource Officers and other units.</p> <p>In 2023 and 2024, officers, sergeants, commanders and assistant chiefs will receive pay increases of a minimum 1% to a maximum 6% based on the Seattle-Bellevue-Everett Consumer Price Index for urban wage earners.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Oxfam: quarter billion in extreme poverty
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/apr/12/quarter-of-a-billion-people-now-face-extreme-poverty-warns-oxfam
GIST	<p>The rising price of food caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and increased energy costs could push a quarter of a billion more people into extreme poverty, Oxfam has warned.</p> <p>The charity said these new challenges had piled on to the economic crises created by Covid, and called for urgent international action, including cancelling debt repayments for poorer countries.</p> <p>"Without immediate radical action, we could be witnessing the most profound collapse of humanity into extreme poverty and suffering in memory," said Oxfam's international executive director, Gabriela Bucher.</p> <p>Oxfam's briefing, released on Tuesday ahead of World Bank and IMF spring meetings next week, said indebted governments could be forced to cut public spending to meet the rising cost of importing fuel and food.</p> <p>Oxfam said cancelling debt repayments for this year and next could free up \$30bn (£23bn) for dozens of the countries facing the biggest debts.</p> <p>The World Bank had already estimated that 198 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty this year as a result of the pandemic. But Oxfam estimates that 65 million more people are at risk if the invasion of Ukraine and rising energy prices are taken into account. It also estimates that 28 million more people will be left undernourished as a result.</p> <p>Oxfam called for more taxes on the wealthiest and also on companies that profit from crises such as the pandemic or the Ukraine war. It also called for the G20 to earmark \$100bn of an existing austerity fund for poor countries to draw on, and protect the poorest from inflation through subsidies and cutting taxes on goods and services.</p> <p>The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization reported last week that the war in Ukraine had made food commodities more expensive than ever, costing more than a third in March than at the same time last year.</p> <p>The Middle East and parts of Africa are expected to be particularly affected because of disrupted grain imports from the Black Sea region, which have compounded existing economic and climate crises.</p> <p>Oxfam said rising costs could see food account for 40% of incomes in sub-Saharan Africa.</p> <p>Bucher said lack of action from governments to tackle rising poverty was "inexcusable".</p> <p>She said: "We reject any notion that governments do not have the money or means to lift all people out of poverty and hunger, and ensure their health and welfare. We only see the absence of economic imagination and political will to actually do so."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 CDC: STIs surged to record high 2020
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SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/12/us-sexually-transmitted-infections-record-2020
GIST	<p>After briefly dropping in the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) then resurged beyond 2019 levels to finish the year at a record high, according to new data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).</p> <p>Researchers with the CDC said its report, 2020 Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance, shows how Covid-19 disrupted in-person healthcare and diverted scarce public health resources away from STIs, which had been on the rise for years.</p> <p>Ultimately, diverting resources to Covid-19 caused young people, racial minorities and gay and bisexual men to suffer disproportionately from new infections, it said.</p> <p>The new data provides “the clearest picture yet of [the impact of] Covid-19 on STIs”, said Dr Jonathan Mermin, director of the CDC’s National Center for HIV, viral hepatitis, STD and tuberculosis prevention. “Honestly, there’s just much to be done.”</p> <p>The CDC’s new report covers 2020, the first year of the pandemic and a time defined by lockdowns, social distancing and fear. The new report covers rates of gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis.</p> <p>Early in 2020, it appeared social distancing might reduce rates of STIs. However, by the end of the year few infections had surged past levels seen in 2019. In just one example, rates of gonorrhea had jumped 10% by year’s end, said Mermin.</p> <p>Those increased rates were driven by a lack of in-person appointments, delayed health screenings, lapses in health insurance for people who lost jobs and “crumbling public health infrastructure” that diverted contact tracers and testing supplies to Covid-19.</p> <p>In 2020, reported cases of gonorrhea increased 10% and primary and secondary syphilis (two stages of the disease, with different symptoms) 7% compared with 2019. Especially worrying was the rate of congenital syphilis, or syphilis passed from mother to newborn, which increased 15% from 2019 and is up 235% compared with 2016.</p> <p>Rates of chlamydia declined 13% in 2020, but researchers said the decline was not something to celebrate. Rather, chlamydia is typically asymptomatic and detected in in-person screenings such as pap smears. Because people put off these visits in 2020, cases probably went undiagnosed.</p> <p>What’s more, groups that suffered disproportionately from new infections, such as racial and ethnic minorities, are among the same groups who were disproportionately affected by Covid-19. STIs also especially affected the young and poor.</p> <p>“Some racial and ethnic minority groups continue to experience higher rates of STDs,” and half of new infections are among 15- to 24-year-olds, said Dr Leandro Mena, director of CDC’s division of STD prevention.</p> <p>For decades, the US has spent more on healthcare than any other country, yet has worse health outcomes than many other developed nations. Such high rates of STIs among people with fewer resources are a reflection of “the nation’s failure to provide sufficient healthcare for everyone who needs it”, said Mena.</p> <p>Although the 2020 data is grim, researchers said there were bright spots. For example, testing capacity and contact-tracing staffing have stabilized since 2020, and are reaching pre-pandemic levels – though that may be because many health departments have given up or significantly scaled back contact-tracing for Covid-19 following the Omicron surge.</p> <p>The federal government also released the first national five-year plan to combat STIs, and has invested \$200m to build public health capacity. The hope, said researchers, was to avoid disrupting services for diseases such as STIs should another emergency occur.</p>

HEADLINE	04/12 Northeast rising cases part of larger surge?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/12/world/covid-19-mandates-cases-vaccine?name=stylncoronavirus&region=hub&block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection#experts-say-it-is-unclear-whether-rising-cases-in-the-northeastern-us-are-the-start-of-a-larger-surge
GIST	<p>Covid outbreaks in elite circles in Washington, D.C., and on Broadway have received a lot of news media attention in recent days, but they appear to be only one part of a broader regional rise in infections: States in the Northeast are now reporting an uptick in cases.</p> <p>Last week, The Morning newsletter covered what seemed like a mystery at the time: Coronavirus cases were not broadly rising across the U.S. despite the emergence of the BA.2 subvariant of Omicron. But the Northeast's continued increase has driven a new round of concerns, with nationwide cases up 10 percent over the past two weeks.</p> <p>What is less clear is whether the regional rise will amount to a much larger Covid surge. "There's definitely something coming," William Hanage, an epidemiologist at Harvard, told The Morning. "But depending on all the moving parts, it might be a ripple relative to previous waves."</p> <p>So far, recorded cases are up slightly, standing at about 6 percent of where they were during the peak of the Omicron wave in the Northeast. (More cases are probably going undetected, as more people use at-home tests without reporting them to public health officials.)</p> <p>Hospitalizations are also relatively low in most Northeastern states, and deaths are actually down. Both lag behind cases, typically by weeks. "So it could be too early to see a rise," said Jennifer Nuzzo, an epidemiologist at Brown University.</p> <p>But some experts believe an increase in hospitalizations should have started showing up in at least some places, based on how previous waves played out.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 As families grieve, grandparents step up
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/04/12/well/family/covid-deaths-parents-grandparents.html
GIST	<p>This is not what Ida Adams thought life would be like at 62.</p> <p>She had planned to continue working as a housekeeper at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore until she turned 65. After retiring, she and her husband, Andre, also 62, thought they might travel a little — "get up and go whenever we felt like it."</p> <p>She didn't expect to be hustling a seventh-grader off to school each weekday. But in January 2021, Ms. Adams's daughter, Kimya Lomax, died of Covid-19 at 43 after three weeks alone in a hospital with no visitors permitted. She left behind a young daughter.</p> <p>Suddenly the girl, Kimiya, now 13, was accompanying her grandmother to a funeral home to help select a white coffin. "I wanted her to have a say in her mother's homegoing," Ms. Adams said.</p> <p>In December, a coalition called the Covid Collaborative estimated that about 167,000 American children like Kimiya had lost a parent or primary caregiver to the pandemic, with much higher rates among communities of color. More recently, researchers at Imperial College London put the number of children who have lost one or both parents at nearly 200,000.</p> <p>Grandparents have always been the first line of defense in the wake of such tragedies. The nonprofit Generations United reports that prepandemic, 2.6 million American children already lived in "grandfamilies," raised by relatives for reasons ranging from military deployment and incarceration to</p>

deaths from substance abuse, other illnesses or accidents. Many more grandparents provide other kinds of support — child care, transportation, financial help — when a parent dies.

In 2017, Ms. Lomax and her daughter had moved into the Adamses' home in Baltimore during a period of unemployment and health challenges. She soon got her diabetes under control and oversaw her daughter's daily routine. But now she was gone.

Kimiya asked to continue living with her Nana and Papa; her father, who lives nearby, agreed that it would be the least disruptive arrangement. Ms. Adams received temporary legal custody.

Such an abrupt change in roles can stress both generations. The children are destabilized by loss, and "the grandparents' lives are suddenly not what they expected when they retired," said Donna Butts, executive director of Generations United. "Their dreams go into the closet."

Ms. Adams retired early, finding that her work schedule too often left Kimiya alone at home. "The dynamics have changed," Ms. Adams said. "I was Nana. I was the lenient one. Now, I have to be the disciplinarian, the one to say: 'Kimiya, do your homework. Kimiya, turn off the TV.' Now, I'm the custodian. I'm everything."

Instead of traveling, she's raising a teenager in a world that feels very different from her previous experience as a parent. "When I raised my daughter, there was no internet, no social media, no cellphones," she said.

"People say it's a blessing" to care for her granddaughter, she said. "Yes, it is. But it's also work, a responsibility I have to take on that I wasn't ready for."

They are managing, with the help of family members, a school counselor Kimiya sees weekly and a bereavement support group at Roberta's House, a local family grief center.

"She's the light in my darkness," Ms. Adams said of her granddaughter. "We need each other now."

The children who get counseling at Roberta's House have lost family members to accidents, illnesses and other causes. Now Covid loss is also affecting a generation of young people.

"Their parents went away to the hospital and that was the last time they saw them," said Lane Pease Hendricks, program director at [Kate's Club](#) in Atlanta, a children's bereavement organization. "Some families had to delay funerals until very recently, and that lack of ritual leaves families floundering."

For both children and grandparents, Covid can also become an inescapable topic, said Carolyn Taverner, co-founder of [Emma's Place](#), a grief center for children and families on Staten Island. "It's all over the news; it's all anyone talks about. You never have a moment when something isn't reminding you of your loss."

The National Alliance for Children's Grief maintains a list of national nonprofit [organizations for bereaved children](#) that can help kids, surviving parents and involved grandparents feel less alone in their grief. It offers support groups, counseling, summer camps and family activities.

And [kinship navigator programs](#), funded by states and the federal government, help connect grandfamilies to important services: housing, food benefits, legal guidance. "When grandparents have no idea where to turn for help, for accurate information, the navigators make a tremendous difference," Ms. Butts, of Generations United, said.

The New York Times spoke to several grandparents around the country about how the deaths of their children had altered their relationships with and responsibilities for their grandchildren.

In July, four members of Jocelyn Rivers's family contracted Covid-19 and sought help at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta — first, Ms. Rivers's daughter Valencia, who complained that she couldn't breathe, then Ms. Rivers and another daughter and son-in-law.

Three members of the family recovered. But Valencia, a previously healthy 35-year-old, called her mother to say "I love you" before entering the intensive care unit. She died after a two-week hospitalization, leaving two young children.

Ms. Rivers didn't hesitate to take on their care, even though she herself needed supplemental oxygen for weeks after her release from the hospital. Valencia, a single parent, had moved into her mother's townhome when she was pregnant with her first child, so the three generations had always lived together.

"I've been with them all their lives. She trusted me with them," Ms. Rivers said of the children. "My granddaughter called me 'Mommy' until she was 3."

Ms. Rivers is 60, with knees that sometimes ache from arthritis. She now drives JaCorey, 6, and JaKyrea, 8, to and from school each day. She ferries them to Little League practices and dance classes, keeps house and supervises their schoolwork.

"They keep me going," she said. "It would be harder if I didn't have them with me and I was thinking about my child all the time."

A school counselor referred both the children and their grandmother to [Kate's Club](#), where they learned to talk about sorrow. "When they feel bad, they say, 'Nana, I'm missing my mommy today,'" Ms. Rivers said. "I say, 'Do you want to talk about it?' Sometimes they say, 'No, I just want you to hold me.'" They comfort her when she's struggling, too.

For children, a parent's death is one of the most difficult losses to recover from, said Deborah Jacobvitz, a child psychologist at the University of Texas at Austin who researches adults who experienced family loss during childhood. Afterward, "the yearning and searching is normal, but if it's prolonged for years, it can compromise their mental health and their own relationships," Dr. Jacobvitz added.

But with support from surviving family members like grandparents, buttressed as needed by grief counseling or support groups, "most kids will come through OK," she said. "They can become healthy adults and thrive."

Carol and Angelo Conti, both 74, were veteran grandparents. Carol had retired early to become "a professional grandma," caring for each of her four grandchildren at their home on Staten Island until they reached school age.

In 2020, the couple were still providing child care for the youngest, Mia, whose mother, Angela, commuted daily from Jersey City, dropping Mia off with her parents on the way to work. The arrangement worked well, but "we were looking forward to peace and quiet and a house not full of toys," Carol recalled. The couple had been thinking about road trips to Florida, California, even Alaska.

But the Contis' lives were upended when Angela's husband, Jason Scala, 47, died of Covid-19 in April 2020 after a six-week hospitalization. Everyone agreed the households needed to merge. So that August, after clearing out rooms in the house where Angela had grown up, the Contis welcomed her back under their roof, along with Sofia, now 8, and Mia, now 6, and their dog.

These days, Angelo gets up at 6:30 a.m. to make breakfast for the girls. He and Carol shuttle them to doctors and dentists, Girl Scouts meetings, soccer and softball games. "My food bills are enormous," Carol said.

The older Contis value their family's closeness, but they're also conscious of time passing. Road trip plans have been set aside, perhaps for good; Angelo doubts they'll want to drive to the Grand Canyon when they're 80. They have less time to spend with their older grandchildren, who live nearby.

"I'm eternally grateful to my parents and super aware that they're sacrificing whatever they wanted to be doing to the kids' needs," said Angela Conti, 45, a lawyer who plans to eventually move her family back into a home of their own. "They don't complain, but it is a lot of work."

Carol sometimes wakes up worrying about her daughter and the children. When Carol needed knee replacement surgery, Sofia became very upset. Carol made a point of calling from the hospital to reassure her that this wasn't like that time Daddy went to the hospital; Nonna would be home soon.

At least weekly, Willie and Denise Lanzisera drove half an hour to spend an evening with their daughter's family, who also live on Staten Island.

The Lanziseras had been hands-on child care providers prepandemic, but once their grandchildren entered preschool, it was enough to have dinner together, host sleepovers, gather on holidays and enjoy family vacations at the Jersey Shore.

"We were definitely a part of their lives," Denise recalled. "But not like now."

Now, their daughter Nicole Lanza is raising Thomas, 8, and Anita, 6, on her own. In October 2020, her husband, Thomas Lanza, 41, a high school special education teacher, died of Covid-19 with shocking swiftness; he didn't survive the ambulance ride to the hospital.

At first, the Lanziseras virtually moved in, spending days and nights with Ms. Lanza and the children. "We couldn't leave her," Denise said. "We had to help her navigate this new path as a single parent."

Denise, 62, still spends one night a week at the Lanzas' apartment, helping with the kids and housework. Ms. Lanza, the kids and the dog also travel to her parents' home for long weekends. "She walks in, makes herself a cup of tea, and she can relax for a day or two," said Willie, 64.

"My parents are the ultimate safety net," Ms. Lanza, 37, said. "They catch me before I realize I'm falling."

They're all grateful for [Emma's Place](#), which provides grief counseling for the children and their mother. "It's helped immensely," Denise said. "We talk about Tommy all the time and we let the children talk about him. We never shush it. We can let the tears flow."

In deciding how much time and energy they could contribute, "we set up some limits," Denise said. "We're getting older and we feel it. Sometimes we need time for ourselves."

Usually, though, they're on the case. "This parenting thing," Willie said, "is a forever job."

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HEADLINE	04/12 DIA warns: China space-based arsenal
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/12/chinas-orbiting-hypersonic-missile-part-of-growing/
GIST	<p>China's test of an orbiting hypersonic missile last year demonstrated Beijing's longest range land attack weapon and is part of a growing arsenal of space warfare capabilities, according to a Defense Intelligence Agency report on space threats released Tuesday.</p> <p>The hypersonic missile test in July was one element of the arsenal of space weaponry built and deployed by China and Russia that is aimed at attacking U.S. satellites used by the military for communications and precision-guided missiles, the DIA report states. Joint Chiefs of Staff head Gen. Mark A. Milley last fall memorably called the Chinese hypersonic test "very close to a Sputnik moment" for U.S. military planners.</p>

“The loss of space-based communication and navigation services could have a devastating impact on warfighters during a conflict — that’s one of the most serious scenarios anticipated,” DIA Director Lt. Gen. Scott Berrier said in releasing the report.

“A secure, stable and accessible space domain is crucial as China and Russia’s space-based capabilities and electronic-warfare activities continue to grow,” Gen. Berrier added.

Space-based electronic systems are used in homes, transportation networks, the electrical grid, banking systems and for conducting military operations around the world, the report said.

“Adversaries have observed more than 30 years of U.S. military operations supported by space systems and are now seeking ways to expand their own capabilities and deny the U.S. a space-enabled advantage,” the report said.

The July 27, 2021, launch of a Chinese ICBM tipped with a hypersonic glide vehicle — an ultrahigh-speed, maneuvering missile — is known as a fractional orbital launch. The glide vehicle traveled around 24,800 miles in space before reentering the atmosphere and successfully striking a ground target.

The flight test lasted more than 100 minutes, making it “the greatest distance flown and longest flight time of any Chinese land attack weapons system to date,” the report said.

The Chinese have been developing space-based weapons since 2006 that will be “used to attack ground, sea, or air targets from space,” the report said. The development includes methods to safely reenter the atmosphere, separating payloads, building delivery vehicles and transferring orbits as part of the targeting process.

China’s space warfare arsenal also includes sensors capable of targeting satellites, ground-launched anti-satellite missiles, orbiting killer robot satellites that can grab or crush satellites, and laser, electronic and cyberspace warfare tools.

The report, “Challenges to Security in Space,” states that the combined military and civilian space fleets of China and Russia grew by 70% between 2019 and 2021. The 80-page report highlights the growth in space sensors and satellites used to prepare space for military operation and outlines the military units in charge of space warfare.

Both China and Russia also are seeking to explore the moon and Mars and their tests, including a recent Russian destruction of a satellite with a missile, produce dangerous floating debris that threatens satellites and crewed spacecraft for decades and even centuries.

Russia tested its Nudol anti-missile system against a satellite in November, producing over 1,500 large debris pieces and tens of thousands of pieces of “lethal but non-trackable debris,” the report said.

Russia’s space weaponry also includes several ground-based lasers guns that can blind or destroy orbiting satellites, including a laser weapon called Peresvet that Russian President Vladimir Putin called “a new type of strategic weapon.” The ground-mobile Peresvet laser has been deployed with five strategic missile divisions and would be used to blind enemy optical intelligence satellites and mask the movement of mobile strategic missiles.

Moscow also is building an air-launched anti-satellite missile called Burevestnik fired from a MiG-31 jet.

Orbiting Russian anti-satellite systems including robot satellites that can maneuver close to satellites and launch explosives or use electronics to destroy satellites. One of these satellites launched in

November 2019 tracked a U.S. national security satellite, “approaching close enough to create potentially dangerous operating conditions,” the report said.

Kevin Ryder, DIA’s senior analyst for space and counterspace, said China’s hypersonic test last year was the first time the weapon was observed. He noted it is “a little early” for intelligence analysts to determine if the weapon will be used for nuclear strikes, conventional attacks or both.

China has invested more in its space capabilities than Russia, Mr. Ryder noted.

Asked which Chinese or Russian space warfare capability is most alarming, John F. Huth, DIA’s defense intelligence officer for space and counterspace, said all the threats are a concern.

“It’s not just a capability,” he said. “It’s the fact that they both have a space force and their intent is to make space part of that combined arms efforts.”

Mr. Ryder agreed. “From my perspective, all the capabilities are equal in nature and it depends on how, when and where they use them,” he said.

Other sections of the report note that Iran and North Korea appear to be developing space capabilities that can be used in future wars.

“Iran recognizes the strategic value of space and counterspace capabilities and will attempt to deny an adversary use of space during a conflict,” the report said.

“North Korea’s ballistic missiles and [space launch vehicles], such as the Unha-3 SLV, in theory could be used to target satellites in a conflict.”

Nuclear weapons also could be detonated in space to create an electronics-damaging electromagnetic pulse.

In contrast to the growing space weapons threat from overseas adversaries, the newly created U.S. Space Force has a single declared weapon: an electronic jammer and boasts no anti-satellite missiles.

However, a modified Navy SM-3 anti-missile interceptor was used to successfully shoot down a falling National Reconnaissance Office satellite in February 2008, demonstrating some anti-satellite missile capability.

Space Force counterspace weapons development remain classified and are said to be hampered by opposition from arms control advocates who oppose accelerating the arms race in space. Despite advanced space warfare capabilities, both China and Russia are promoting arms control initiatives aimed at limiting U.S. space warfare capabilities, the report said.

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HEADLINE	04/12 US to ramp up Ukraine weapons support?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/12/us-prepared-ramp-weapons-support-ukraine-top-penta/
GIST	<p>Pentagon officials say they are considering enhanced artillery support to Kyiv, enabling Ukrainian forces to take on invading Russians at much greater distances than with weapons such as a Javelin anti-tank missile.</p> <p>Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks said Tuesday the Biden administration is in a “continuing dialogue” with Ukrainian defense officials about the types of firepower available to them from NATO countries to fend off Russian attacks. President Biden and NATO leaders have ruled out sending Western troops to the fight as well as certain classes of military aid that could provoke a direct fight with a nuclear-armed Russia.</p>

“We will continue to look at the type of capabilities that the Ukrainians are asking for in terms of how to give them more range and distance,” Ms. Hicks said during a briefing to the Washington, D.C.-based Defense Writers Group. “Are we looking at a wide range of systems in doing that? Yes. Is there a willingness to consider longer-range armaments? Yes.”

Ms. Hicks said she wasn’t prepared to announce any new developments on the firepower front, saying any major enhancement would require White House approval.

U.S. military leaders began reexamining troop and weapons deployments in Europe even before Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine’s disputed Donbas region. It began in 2014 after Russia annexed Crimea.

“But we’ve really leaned into those in the last several months,” Ms. Hicks said. “We already had forces forward, for instance, in the Baltics, Romania [and] Bulgaria on a rotational basis.”

But any major changes in force posture will probably have to wait for the summer NATO summit in Madrid, she said.

The U.S. has provided \$2 billion to support Ukraine, including \$1.7 billion since the start of the invasion, but Ms. Hicks acknowledged an extended war would require a continuing resupply of weapons. She said the Defense Department must work with allies and industry to give Ukraine what it needs to continue its fight while not drawing too much from the U.S. supply.

U.S. planners also have to weigh increased resources in Europe against what Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has repeatedly described as the “pacing challenge” for American forces posed by a rising China in Asia.

The question, she said, is: “How do we make sure we have what we need but also support others?” she said.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Biden accuses Putin of genocide in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/13/joe-biden-accuses-vladimir-putin-of-committing-genocide-in-ukraine
GIST	<p>Joe Biden has accused Russia of carrying out genocide in Ukraine, saying that Vladimir Putin is “trying to wipe out the idea of even being Ukrainian”.</p> <p>Biden has been consistently outspoken in denouncing Russian wholesale killing of Ukrainian civilians, labelling Putin as a “war criminal” in mid-March. Multiple investigations are under way into Russian atrocities in Ukraine, which include the razing of Mariupol and the executions of civilians in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha.</p> <p>The prosecutor at the international criminal court in the Hague opened a case in February saying there was “a reasonable basis to believe that both alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed in Ukraine”.</p> <p>Proving a case under the 1948 Genocide Convention requires an “intent [by the accused] to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”.</p> <p>Biden first used the word in passing on Tuesday at a domestic policy event in Iowa about the use of ethanol in petrol.</p> <p>“Your family budget, your ability to fill up your tank, none of it should hinge on whether a dictator declares war and commits genocide half a world away,” he said.</p>

Questioned later on whether he intended to apply the term to Russians actions in [Ukraine](#), Biden told journalists: “Yes, I called it genocide because it’s become clearer and clearer that Putin is just trying to wipe out the idea of even being Ukrainian.

“And the evidence is mounting,” he said. “More evidence is coming out of the horrible things that the Russians have done in Ukraine. And we’re going to only learn more and more about the devastation. We’ll let the lawyers decide internationally whether or not it qualifies, but it sure seems that way to me.”

His comments were quickly welcomed by the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who applauded what he called the “true words of a true leader”.

“Calling things by their names is essential to stand up to evil,” [Zelenskiy said on Twitter](#). “We are grateful for US assistance provided so far and we urgently need more heavy weapons to prevent further Russian atrocities.”

Prior to his invasion, Putin described Ukrainian [separate existence as illegitimate](#), as he argued that Russians and Ukrainian were one people.

As well as wholesale killing of civilians, Russia has been accused of the [forcible transfer](#) of captured Ukrainian civilians into Russia, including large numbers of children, while changing the rules to make it easier for [Russian families to adopt](#) them.

Determining the line between crimes against humanity and genocide has sometimes proved difficult and divisive. The [international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia](#) ruled that the slaughter of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica constituted genocide but not the mass killings carried out by Serb forces in other municipalities, a distinction that outraged the populations of the other devastated towns.

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HEADLINE	04/13 Day 49 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/13/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-49-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• US president Joe Biden has labelled Russia’s actions in Ukraine as “genocide”, saying Russian president Vladimir Putin “is trying to wipe out the idea of being able to be Ukrainian”. Biden made the remarks to reporters as he prepared to board Air Force One to return to Washington after an event on the economy in Iowa. “We’ll let the lawyers decide internationally whether or not it qualifies, but it sure seems that way to me,” he said.• Putin’s closest ally in Ukraine, Viktor Medvedchuk, has been captured by Ukrainian law enforcement, Volodymyr Zelenskiy announced. Medvedchuk is the leader of the Opposition Platform for Life, Ukraine’s biggest opposition party. Zelenskiy proposed releasing him to Russia in exchange for Ukrainians captured by Russian forces. Zelenskiy also warned Russia: “Let Medvedchuk be an example for you. Even the former oligarch did not escape, not to mention much more ordinary criminals from the Russian boondocks. We will get everyone.”• Zelenskiy said it is “not yet possible” to draw 100% conclusions about what kind of substance was used in Mariupol on Tuesday. Earlier, he voiced concerns that Russian forces were preparing “a new stage of terror” that could involve the use of chemical weapons in Ukraine. Andriy Biletsky, the leader of the Azov volunteer regiment, claimed on Monday that three people in the southern port city had experienced “poisoning by warfare chemicals, but without catastrophic consequences”.• However, some observers have expressed skepticism that the available evidence points towards a chemical weapons attack. It is too soon to say definitively what happened, but one expert cautioned that it remained unclear whether chemicals, let alone chemical weapons, had been used, based on the evidence initially available. A senior US defence official said the US cannot confirm reports of use of chemical weapons in Mariupol.• Civilians have fled eastern Ukraine in advance of a widely forecast attack and Russian forces closed in on the ruins of the southern city of Mariupol. Ukrainian forces were preparing for a

	<p>new Russian offensive in the east of the country, with the governor of Luhansk, Serhiy Gaidai, urging residents to evacuate as soon as possible using agreed humanitarian corridors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mayor of Mariupol, Vadym Boichenko, said the latest estimate was that around 21,000 civilian residents had been killed in the Ukrainian port city since the start of the Russian invasion. The number of deaths in Mariupol could be as high as 22,000, Pavlo Kyrylenko, the head of the Donetsk regional military administration, told CNN. • The mayor of the Ukrainian town of Bucha, near Kyiv, said authorities had so far found 403 bodies of people they believed were killed by Russian forces during their occupation of the area. That number was still growing, Anatoliy Fedoruk said, adding that it was too early for residents to return to the town. • Putin said Ukraine had deviated from the agreements made at a peace conference in Istanbul, and that talks were in a “dead end”. When asked about the Russian president’s comments, a member of the Ukrainian delegation, Mykhailo Podolyak, said negotiations with Russians were very hard but were continuing. • Putin also claimed Russia’s military operation was going as planned, and that Russia’s aim in Ukraine was to meet all its goals and minimise losses. “We will achieve our objectives, there are no doubts,” Putin told workers at the Vostochny cosmodrome in Russia’s far east. “Its goals are absolutely clear and noble,” he said of Russia’s military campaign. He said Russia “had no other choice” but to launch what he calls a “special military operation”, and vowed it would “continue until its full completion and the fulfilment of the tasks that have been set”. • The World Bank is planning financial support to Ukraine worth \$1.5bn (£1.2bn) to help keep critical services running as the country fights a fresh assault by Russia. The bank said the funds would be used to support the continuation of key government services, including wages for hospital workers, pensions for elderly people and social programmes for vulnerable people. • A Briton who has been fighting with the Ukrainian armed forces in the besieged city of Mariupol has been forced to surrender along with his unit to the Russians because they have run out of food and ammunition. Aiden Aslin, from Newark, joined Ukraine’s marines in 2018 but has told friends and family that he and his comrades cannot hold out any longer as the Russians gradually tighten their grip on the southern port city. • Zelenskiy rejected a request by the German president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, to visit Kyiv along with other European politicians on Wednesday. According a report in the German newspaper Bild, the reason for the denial was the German Social Democrat’s previously close ties to the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, and his history as an advocate of close Russian-German economic ties.
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HEADLINE	04/12 Key Russia railway bridge destroyed
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/12/key-russian-railway-bridge-destroyed-in-belgorod-border-region-with-ukraine
GIST	<p>A key Russian railway bridge has been damaged in the border region with Ukraine in a potential act of sabotage – as Russia relies on its railroads to shift its attacking forces in preparation for a massive assault on eastern Ukraine.</p> <p>Photographs from the bridge in Russia’s Belgorod region showed that a section of rail had been forced upward, possibly due to an explosion. The photographs, as well as news of the incident, were first published on Tuesday by the local Russian governor and local media.</p> <p>“There are no casualties,” governor Vyacheslav Gladkov wrote in an online statement. “Only the railway track is destroyed ... I will inform you about the reasons later.”</p> <p>The incident comes as Russia has begun militarising its border regions near Ukraine by raising threat alerts, erecting military checkpoints and mobilising local townspeople in a sign that Russia’s war effort is shifting toward east Ukraine.</p>

Ukraine has not confirmed if it stands behind the attack on the railway bridge, which commentators said would make sense as a cross-border raid meant to slow Russia's shifting of heavy artillery and other military vehicles needed to prepare for an assault in Ukraine's Donbas region.

Russia relies heavily on rail to move its military equipment. The bridge sits just four miles from the border on a rail line that goes south into Ukraine and lies on a supply line between Russia and the territory it holds close to the city of Izyum near the Donbas.

Ukrainian intelligence has warned that Russia may be preparing "false flag" attacks that could justify a new offensive in coming weeks.

Vladimir Putin on Tuesday said the war would continue "until its full completion and we achieve our goals", blaming the west for forcing Russia to attack Ukraine. He also denied evidence that Russian soldiers committed war crimes in the Ukrainian town of Bucha.

Ukrainian officials said that Russia may seek to drive public opinion in support of the war by staging attacks that can then be blamed on Ukraine.

"Russian intelligence services are planning a series of terrorist attacks with bombing and compromising residential buildings, hospitals and schools in Russian settlements," said Maj Gen Kyrylo Budanov, the head of Ukraine's military intelligence, in a statement.

He added that Belgorod, along with cities in Crimea, could be among those cities targeted. "Trenches are actively being dug in the Belgorod and Kursk regions, there is panic about an imaginary attack of Ukrainian volunteer battalions and diversion groups," he said.

Russia previously claimed that Ukraine had targeted a fuel dump in a helicopter raid earlier this month. Ukraine denied responsibility for that attack, with a senior official saying that "whatever happens on Russia's territory is Russia's responsibility".

As Russia shifts its military toward the east, there are signs that the military is increasing controls in its border regions.

Six Russian regions on the border with Ukraine raised their terrorist threat levels on Monday, citing fears of "provocations". Photographs showed that new vehicle checkpoints had been erected in the Kursk and Belgorod regions, with police stopping drivers and performing car searches.

In Belgorod, a Russian city that sits just 18 miles from the border, the mayor called on Tuesday for locals to join neighbourhood watch groups. "Duties ... include patrolling the streets in the evening and at night, as well as helping the police to ensure law and order," the order said, according to state media.

The Belgorod region has also banned the use of firecrackers and fireworks "so as not to frighten people with unnecessary loud sounds", reports said.

Russia's railways appear particularly vulnerable during the buildup.

So-called "railway rebels" in Belarus performed more than a dozen acts of sabotage during the early weeks of the war, in an effort to disrupt supply trains travelling from Belarus to Russian units stationed in northern Ukraine.

The attacks on relay switches and other infrastructure had briefly shut down major routes, including the line from Minsk to the besieged Ukrainian city of Chernihiv.

In January, Belarusian cyber-partisans opposed to Alexander Lukashenko told the Guardian that they had hacked the country's railway system in an effort to disrupt the Russian military buildup that preceded its invasion of Ukraine.

HEADLINE	04/12 Former detainee to testify: China abuses
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/13/former-xinjiang-detainee-arrives-in-us-to-testify-over-china-abuses
GIST	<p>Ovalbek Turdakun still doesn't know what was in the shot the doctors in the Xinjiang detention centre gave him in 2018. He and his 23 cell mates were told it was a vaccine to prevent colds but Turdakun said that after the injection he and his cellmates felt pain in their ears, hands and feet; yellow fluid came out of their ears; some had trouble walking. When he was released after 10 months' detention, Turdakun still struggled to walk.</p> <p>Turdakun is among the nearly 2 million people who are estimated to have been imprisoned in China's mass detention camps in the Xinjiang region. On Tuesday, Turdakun, his wife, Zhyldyz Uraalieva, and son Daniyel Ovalbek arrived in the US on a special immigration authorization called significant public benefit parole which grants entry to people who would provide "significant public benefit" such as testifying in a criminal or legal proceeding.</p> <p>In an interview with the Guardian, Turdakun expressed relief at arriving in the US after months of holding out for approval of their applications. "We were waiting over a hundred days," Turdakun said through a translator. "So it's a great feeling to be in America."</p> <p>Like many other survivors who have spoken publicly about their experience, Turdakun alleges he was detained without a fair trial and tortured repeatedly in "tiger chairs" – steel chairs with restraints to keep people in uncomfortable positions.</p> <p>Unlike many of those who've been detained – the majority of whom are Uyghur and Muslim – Turdakun is ethnically Kyrgyz and Christian, and his case has prompted further concern that China is targeting anyone who is of a different ethnicity and religion.</p> <p>China has repeatedly disputed all allegations of abuse of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities, but the US has accused Beijing of carrying out genocide in Xinjiang.</p> <p>When Turdakun was detained in February 2018, officials said it was because he overstayed his visa during a visit to Kyrgyzstan. During his interrogations, he was repeatedly asked about his religion as well as his marriage to his wife, who was born in Kyrgyzstan.</p> <p>After being released in December 2018, Turdakun was placed on house arrest, forced to work without pay and was put under constant surveillance for a year. Fearing he would be detained again, the family fled to Kyrgyzstan in 2019. There, he was repeatedly contacted by Chinese authorities asking him to return to China, his bank account was frozen, and – after two years – Kyrgyzstan officials refused to renew his visa after two years, putting him and his family at risk of deportation back to China.</p> <p>Now, international human rights lawyers who are arguing that China has committed crimes against humanity in a case they've submitted to the international criminal court (ICC) say Turdakun could provide supporting evidence that Uyghurs and other Chinese ethnic minorities are being forcibly deported to China from countries like Tajikistan.</p> <p>Constant surveillance</p> <p>China is not a member of the ICC, and therefore cannot be tried by the court, but Tajikistan – a country to which Chinese ethnic minorities sometimes flee – is and international human rights lawyers including UK-based Rodney Dixon are trying to use that to bring China's crimes against humanity to trial. Dixon is compiling evidence of poor treatment of Xinjiang residents in Tajikistan with the hope that this would convince the ICC that it has jurisdiction over China's human rights violations and open an investigation. Lawyers believe Turdakun's case would illustrate a pattern of mistreatment in other countries as well.</p>

In a letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas, Dixon wrote in support of Turdakun's application saying that his account of his detention would be important evidence in any future investigation. "You will no doubt be aware of the dangers that he and his family currently face," the letter reads. "It is crucial to keep them safe and secure ... It is vital that his evidence is available for the ICC and for the international community."

A camera is mounted on a watchtower at a high-security facility in Xinjiang, China, believed to be a re-education camp where Uyghurs are detained.

Every morning for 10 months, Turdakun and his 23 cell mates would wake up in their crowded, windowless but constantly lit cell and have to sing songs praising the Chinese Communist party in order to get their breakfast. Though they were crowded into the same cell together, Turdakun and his cell mates were not allowed to speak with each other and spent their days watching videos about how China was growing and developing under the constant surveillance of a network of cameras, Turdakun said. If they spoke or did anything they weren't supposed to do, a loud voice over the speakers would tell them to stop and often they would endure physical punishment, he said. If one person in the cell did something wrong, they were all punished.

For the lightest punishment, Turdakun would have to stand on his tip toes while squatting down and putting his hands on his head. If he tipped over, he would be beaten, he said. While it was hard in the beginning, they had to do it so often that Turdakun said he and his cell mates all eventually became good at it.

The worse punishment involved tiger chairs – of which there were two types, Turdakun said.

The first was in a brightly lit room, with a camera and spotlight. It was in those chairs that he was restrained and interrogated. He was asked about his religion and his marriage to a "Kyrgyz foreigner", according to a briefing submitted to the state department by Conor Healy, the government director of surveillance research organisation IPVM.

There were no questions when you were in the second type of tiger chair. This kind was made entirely of steel, with steel restraints for his waist, arms and legs. It sat in a padded room with a thick door for sound proofing. Turdakun was subjected to this chair three times – each time for at least a day.

Every day for the 10 months Turdakun was detained, his wife visited local officials pleading for her husband's release. Their son was sick, had pain in his knees and was diagnosed with arthritis, Uraalieva said. As a foreigner, she could not work in China and support the family.

Finally, in December 2018, Turdakun was released to house arrest. For a year, he wasn't able to leave his home except for a few permitted activities such as picking up his son from school. Facial recognition cameras followed him everywhere, he said. In interview footage that Healy shared with the Guardian, Turdakun said Hikvision – one of the world's largest manufacturers of cameras – was the brand on the camera he saw everywhere.

If the camera detected any activity that was not permitted, police would visit and interrogate him. Afraid that he would be detained again, Turdakun and his family eventually fled to Kyrgyzstan on foot and received a special resident permit. But after two years, Kyrgyz officials refused to renew his visa.

After that, Turdakun said he had to try to fly under the radar. "You had to be careful because [my] family was back together and we didn't want it separated again."

With the help of a group of Americans and one Canadian, the family fled to a third country where they waited more than three months for authorization to travel to the US.

'Under great threat'

	<p>While the ICC case focuses on the experiences of Chinese ethnic minorities in Tajikistan and other countries as a stand-in for China's treatment of these groups, Turdakun's story shows that it is not just Uyghur Muslims who are targeted. Those detained with Turdakun were largely Kyrgyz, he recalled. He wasn't sure what religion they practised because they weren't allowed to speak.</p> <p>The Kyrgyz were under great threat in China, said Ethan Gutmann, an author and researcher on China studies who first encountered Turdakun and his family as part of his own research. "They're not a huge ethnic minority in China, but they're under great threat," he said. "They're also Christian. That shows that this is not just an attack on Islam – it's an attack on anybody with deeply held religious beliefs."</p> <p>For now, Turdakun hopes the ICC case will "help bring back together more and more families that have been separated".</p> <p>For his family, which is believed to be the only intact family unit who have been brought to the US after fleeing detention camps in China, he says: "My greatest hope is to quickly become an American citizen."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Doubts: Germany commitment to Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/12/world/europe/germany-russia-ukraine-war.html
GIST	<p>BERLIN — Chancellor Olaf Scholz surprised the world, and his own country, when he responded to Russia's invasion of Ukraine with a 100-billion-euro plan to arm Germany, send weapons to Ukraine and end his nation's deep dependence on Russian energy.</p> <p>It was Germany's biggest foreign policy shift since the Cold War, what Mr. Scholz called a "Zeitenwende" — an epochal change — that won applause for his leadership at home and abroad.</p> <p>But six weeks later, the applause has largely ceased. Even as images of atrocities emerge from Ukraine since the invasion by President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, Mr. Scholz has ruled out an immediate oil and gas embargo, saying it would be too costly. He is dragging his feet on sending 100 armored vehicles to Ukraine, saying that Germany must not "rush ahead." There are new debates in the ruling coalition about just how to go forward with the massive task Mr. Scholz has laid out, let alone how fast.</p> <p>Already doubts are building as to the German government's commitment to its own radical plans. "Zeitenwende is real, but the country is the same," said Thomas Bagger, a senior German diplomat who will be the next ambassador to Poland. "Not everyone likes it."</p> <p>The changes Mr. Scholz announced go far deeper than his commitment to spend 2 percent of gross domestic product on the military — some €70 billion (\$76 billion) a year, compared with France's €41 billion (\$44 billion).</p> <p>They go to the heart of Germany's postwar identity as a peaceful exporting nation — and to the heart of a business model that has enriched Germany and made it Europe's largest and most powerful economy.</p> <p>Now Germans are being asked "to rethink everything — our approach to doing business, to energy policy, to defense and to Russia," said Claudia Major, a defense expert at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. "We need a mind-set change. We need to recognize that this is about us — that power politics are back and Germany must play a role."</p> <p>But she added, "Once again Germany is not leading, it is being dragged."</p> <p>Truly reorienting Germans for a new world where security has its real costs — not only in terms potentially of lost lives, but also in lost trade, higher energy prices, slimmer profits and lower economic growth — will be a wrenching endeavor that will take time, even a generation, and more than an afternoon's policy pronouncement.</p>

That realization is dawning, for Germans and their frustrated European partners.

“I don’t understand how anyone in Germany can sleep at night after seeing horrors like this without doing anything about it,” said Andriy Melnyk, Ukraine’s outspoken ambassador in Berlin, referring to the atrocities in Ukraine. “What does it take for Germany to act?”

Even Annalena Baerbock, the self-assured Green foreign minister, expressed concerns that *Zeitenwende* may be more temporary than fundamental. She said she worried that the consensus was fragile, that Germans who favor close ties to Russia were silent now, but had not changed their views.

“You can feel this,” she said in an interview. “They know they have to do it right now with regard to sanctions, energy independence and weapons deliveries, also with regard to how we treat Russia. But actually, they don’t like it.”

Since Mr. Scholz put forth his [Zeitenwende before a special session of the Parliament](#) on Feb. 27, multiple cracks in Germany’s commitment to change have already begun to appear.

German celebrities made headlines with an appeal to the government against rearmament and the “180-degree change in German foreign policy” that has so far been signed by 45,000 people. Green lawmakers have lobbied to spend only part of the €100 billion special fund on the military, citing other needs like “human security” and climate change. Labor unions and industry bosses are warning of catastrophic damage to the economy and an immediate recession if Russian gas stops flowing.

As the chief executive of the German chemicals giant BASF, Michael Heinz, put it last week: “Cheap Russian energy has been the basis of our industry’s competitiveness.”

It has in fact been the basis of the German economy. Now that German businesses are facing the possibility of being asked to do without it, resistance is quietly mounting. Government ministers say they are being asked discreetly by business leaders when things will “go back to normal” — that is, when they can return to business as usual.

Ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification, business as usual has largely meant “change through trade” — the conviction that economic interdependency would alter authoritarian governments like Russia and China for the better and help keep the peace. Prosperity and democracy, the thinking went, go hand in hand.

The link to Russia is particularly complicated by a long and complex history of hot and cold war, including guilt over the millions of Russians killed by the Nazis. This reinforced the belief that the security architecture of Europe had to include Russia and take account of Russian interests.

It was a model that paid off nicely for Germany, too.

“We export to China and import cheap gas from Russia, that’s been the recipe for the German export success,” said Ralph Bollmann, a biographer of Angela Merkel, the former German chancellor who is now seen as having protected Germans from a rivalrous world, but not preparing them for it.

Few in Germany, including its intelligence services, predicted that Mr. Putin would invade a sovereign European country. But the war has set off a cycle of soul-searching, even among prominent politicians like Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the former foreign minister and now federal president.

A senior member of Mr. Scholz’s Social Democratic Party, he was a prominent supporter of the Nord Stream 2 natural-gas pipeline, now halted, that bypassed Ukraine and that Washington opposed.

“We were clinging to the idea of building bridges to Russia that our partners warned us about,” Mr. Steinmeier said, after Mr. Melnyk, the Ukrainian ambassador, accused him of enabling Mr. Putin. “We

failed to build a common Europe,” Mr. Steinmeier said. “We failed to incorporate Russia in our security architecture.” He added: “I was wrong.”

In the immediate aftermath of Mr. Scholz’s Zeitenwende speech, the details of which he had shared with only a handful of people, the resolve to act decisively seemed palpable.

The three diverse parties in his coalition swung behind it and partisan divisions with the conservative opposition were briefly forgotten, too. Public opinion mirrored the shift, rewarding the new chancellor with better popularity ratings.

But in a short time the breadth of the change Mr. Scholz announced seems to have intimidated even his own three-party coalition. “The government has made some courageous decisions, but it can seem afraid of its own courage,” said Jana Puglierin, director of the Berlin office of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

There is skepticism that the political establishment is ready to break fundamentally from Moscow, or that German voters will happily pay so much more for energy and food for the foreseeable future.

“German pacifism runs very deep,” said John Kornblum, a former American ambassador to Germany who has lived in the country on and off since the 1960s. “German illusions may have shattered, but not its traumas about Russia and the war.”

That “neurotic relationship with Russia may be on pause for the moment, but it will return in full force as soon as the shooting stops,” he said.

Nils Schmid, foreign policy spokesman in Parliament for the Social Democrats, said that Germany’s soft stance toward Russia “reflects German society, and what will remain is this idea that Russia is there and part of Europe, and we will have to deal with that.”

The war has produced “dashed hopes” of a peaceful united Europe, shared by his generation of 1989, he said. But he noted that with this war, “There can be no return to business as usual,” adding, “No one really wants to go back to the old times of engagement with Russia.”

Still, he said, “We shouldn’t overdo it. The balance will shift to more deterrence and less dialogue. But we must keep some dialogue.”

Ms. Puglierin has little patience for such arguments. “People need to let these old ideas go and adapt to reality as it is, and not as they want it to be,” she said. “Russia has shown that it does not want a stable relationship on this existing security order, which is now an empty shell.”

A prominent conservative lawmaker, Norbert Röttgen, argued that Germany must make a complete and immediate break with Russia. “War has come back to Europe, one that will affect the political and security order of the continent,” he said.

Germany must also draw on the lessons of its dependency on Russia for its future relationship with the more powerful authoritarian realm of China, on which key sectors of Germany’s export-driven model rely, Mr. Röttgen said.

“The real Zeitenwende,” said Ms. Puglierin, “will come when we remake our model for a future of competition with both Russia and China and realize that every dependency can be used against us.”

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HEADLINE	04/12 World exceeds half-billion known cases
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/12/world/covid-19-mandates-cases-vaccine#the-world-surpasses-half-a-billion-known-coronavirus-cases-amid-concerns-about-testing

The coronavirus is continuing to stalk the world at an astonishing clip, racing past a grim succession of pandemic milestones in 2022: totals of [300 million](#) known cases around the world by early January, [400 million](#) by early February and, as of Tuesday, half a billion.

There have almost certainly been far more infections than that among the global population of 7.9 billion, with many going undetected or unreported, and the reporting gap may only grow wider as some countries, [including the United States](#), scale back official testing.

“That’s dangerous,” Ali Mokdad, an epidemiologist at the University of Washington, and formerly of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said in a recent interview. “If you don’t test, then you don’t know what variants you have.”

Regional officials with the World Health Organization recently [urged African countries to ramp up testing and contact tracing](#), and called for [some countries in the Americas to double down on efforts](#) to increase vaccination and testing as cases remained higher in Europe. (Britain, for instance, has [ended free testing](#).)

A W.H.O. analysis also recently estimated that 65 percent of [Africans had been infected with the coronavirus](#) as of September 2021, nearly 100 times the number of confirmed cases on the continent.

The number of new cases reported around the globe each day has been declining for some time now; the average over the past week has been about 1.1 million cases a day, [according to the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University](#). That’s about 32 percent fewer than two weeks ago.

But over the course of the pandemic, countries with limited public health resources may only have detected and confirmed a tiny fraction of the cases in their populations. And more recent figures may miss many at-home rapid test results that are never officially reported. Many people with infections are never tested at all, because they have no symptoms, or lack access to testing, or want to avoid the consequences of a positive test result, or choose not to for other reasons.

Coronavirus deaths have also been declining. The world reported about 3,800 a day on average over the past week, 23 percent fewer than two weeks ago.

Still, the director-general of the W.H.O., Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, [recently said](#) that the world remains in the [acute phase of the pandemic](#), and many health experts agree.

Experts’ warnings have not stopped many nations from [dropping](#) their pandemic precautions almost completely in the two months since the global case count surpassed 400 million. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [issued new guidelines](#) in late February suggesting that most Americans could stop wearing masks, and no longer needed to maintain social distance or avoid crowded indoor spaces.

“What’s happening globally and in the U.S.,” Dr. Mokdad said, “is that people basically [gave up](#). They just want to go back to normal life.”

That desire is threatened by the swift spread of the Omicron subvariant known as BA.2, the most transmissible version of the virus yet identified. BA.2 now accounts for the vast majority of new cases [in the United States](#) and around [the world](#); it has spread even faster than BA.1, which helped fuel surges over the winter.

The peak of the most recent surge may have passed in some parts of Europe, but Hong Kong is [still trying](#) to escape an outbreak that began in January, and [Shanghai residents](#) are [under lockdown](#) and reporting [food shortages](#).

“The focus on new cases is warranted,” Crystal Watson, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, said in a recent interview. “What we’re seeing in China is a very [extreme surge](#) in cases, because they have not had a lot of exposure there, and the vaccine is less effective there.”

	<p>More than 5.1 billion people — about 66.4 percent of the world population — have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, according to the Our World in Data project at the University of Oxford.</p> <p>More than 1.7 billion booster shots or additional doses have been administered globally. But coverage varies starkly among regions. Africa's rates are the lowest of any continent, with about 20 percent of people having received at least one dose.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 British PM fined; breaking lockdown rules
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/12/world/covid-19-mandates-cases-vaccine#boris-johnson-fined-for-breaking-uk-lockdown-rules
GIST	<p>In recent weeks Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain has revived his fortunes at home by becoming Europe's most aggressive supporter of Ukraine's fierce fight against Russian invasion.</p> <p>But on Tuesday Mr. Johnson was battling for his own survival again, after police fined him for attending a lockdown party in Downing Street that broke coronavirus laws made in the very same building.</p> <p>Mr. Johnson said on Tuesday night that he had paid the fine, though he did not say how much it was, insisting that he would continue in his job despite calls for his resignation, including from the opposition Labour leader. He added: "I once again offer a full apology."</p> <p>The announcement earlier Tuesday by London's Metropolitan Police made Mr. Johnson the first holder of his office in living memory to be found in breach of the law, and provoked anger from Britons who obeyed strict coronavirus rules that sometimes even forbade contact with dying relatives.</p> <p>It also prompted opposition politicians to accuse Mr. Johnson of lying to Parliament by denying that breaches of coronavirus rules occurred in Downing Street or other government buildings. That is dangerous territory for Mr. Johnson because, in Britain, ministers are normally expected to resign if they mislead their fellow lawmakers.</p> <p>But the announcement came after several weeks in which Mr. Johnson has stabilized his leadership through robust support for Ukraine's resistance against Russian military aggression, culminating in his surprise weekend visit to Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital.</p> <p>The media's focus on the war has defused the air of crisis around Downing Street and prompted several internal critics who had made formal demands for a vote of no-confidence in Mr. Johnson to retract them.</p> <p>One of those, Douglas Ross, the leader of the Scottish Conservatives, said on Tuesday that, with conflict raging in Ukraine, "it wouldn't be right to remove the prime minister at this time."</p> <p>Nonetheless the latest twist in the "partygate" saga is an extraordinary development even for Mr. Johnson who has a reputation for extracting himself from crises of his own making.</p> <p>In a statement, London's Metropolitan Police said it would issue fines for at least 50 breaches of the law as part of its inquiry into the "partygate" scandal that, earlier this year, threatened to sweep Mr. Johnson from power after reports emerged of politicians and officials gathering and drinking in Downing Street and other government buildings despite coronavirus rules.</p> <p>The police did not name any of those to be fined, but the prime minister's office later said that Mr. Johnson and the chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, had both been notified that they had broken the law.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 South Africa deadly floods, mudslides
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/12/world/africa/floods-mudslides-south-africa.html
GIST	<p>JOHANNESBURG — Days of heavy rain on the eastern coast of South Africa left at least 45 people dead when rivers burst their banks and mudslides swept through the city of Durban and the surrounding area.</p> <p>The death toll is expected to rise as members of the South African National Defense Force were called in to assist emergency rescue teams in the KwaZulu-Natal province, government officials said Tuesday. Along the coast, vacation homes and shacks alike were swept away in a part of the country known as a getaway for its sun, beaches and warm temperatures.</p> <p>“We were all surprised by the magnitude of this storm,” Mxolisi Kaunda, the mayor of Durban, said in a news briefing.</p> <p>Storms have already caused devastation in several countries in the Southern African region this year, displacing thousands of people and leaving dozens dead. Some scientists attributed the destruction in part to a storm season intensified by rising global temperatures.</p> <p>The island nation of Madagascar has been worst affected, hit by a cyclone and four tropical storms that left at least 178 people dead during February and March.</p> <p>But the storms, originating in the southern Indian Ocean, pummeled the mainland as well. Thousands were displaced along Mozambique’s coastline, with flooding reaching as far inland as landlocked Malawi and Zimbabwe. South Africa’s eastern KwaZulu-Natal province also saw heavy rain and flooding in February.</p> <p>On Tuesday, a new storm left much of the city of Durban flooded. Footage from emergency services showed parts of a national highway resembling a river, with shipping containers dislodged and washed away. In Verulam, a township north of the city, two people were killed when a house collapsed overnight, according to a local emergency services team.</p> <p>Residents sought refuge on higher ground, climbing onto the roofs of houses, office buildings and a Hindu temple, according to rescue workers.</p> <p>In Tongaat, a town 40 minutes north of the city center, a woman driving home with children in the car on Monday evening was swept away when a stream swelled to a gushing river that broke its banks, said Bilall Jeewa of Gift of the Givers, a charity group. The bodies of the woman and two children were found, but the body of a third child presumed dead had yet to be recovered.</p> <p>The floods also brought landslides that destroyed roads and homes in the region. The lower floors of seaside holiday apartments along the north coast were buried by reddish-brown mud, while hillside homes hung precariously after their foundations were washed away, according to video shown on national television.</p> <p>Shanty towns built along rivers were among the most vulnerable, and shack homes were washed away by floodwaters or covered by mud and debris.</p> <p>In a shantytown in Clare Estate, a suburb north of the city, residents dug through mud, metal and wood to try to rescue a family of five trapped in their shack — but the rescuers were too late, said Robert McKenzie, a spokesman for the KwaZulu-Natal Emergency Medical Services.</p> <p>Even as the water receded, emergency workers were struggling to reach the affected areas. By the afternoon, dozens of schoolchildren and their teachers remained trapped in their classrooms, waiting to be rescued, Kwazi Mshengu, head of the provincial education department, told eNCA, a national news broadcaster. Nearly 100 schools had been damaged, and 500 schools in the region were closed, he said.</p>

Large parts of the city were without electricity and water after power stations and water treatment plants were damaged, said Mr. Kaunda, the Durban mayor. The city is still recovering from widespread riots and looting last July, during some of the worst civil unrest to roil South Africa since the end of apartheid.

Rain was expected to continue pounding the area on Tuesday and again later in the week, according to the South African Weather Service.

The heavy rains stem from a common weather phenomenon in South Africa known as a cut-off low, in which a low pressure system develops and its flow across the atmosphere is disrupted, resulting in a slow-moving storm.

“It is very common for this time of year,” said Kgolofelo Mahlangu, a forecaster with the weather service, noting that similar heavy rains battered the region around this time in 2017 and 2019.

Some climate scientists are attributing the increase in the intensity of the recent storms to environmental changes. A study published this week by [World Weather Attribution](#), an initiative that specializes in pinpointing the links between climate change and individual weather events, said that “climate change is elevating risk in places where tropical cyclones are already affecting agriculture, infrastructure, livelihoods and lives.”

The study looked at rainfall levels during Cyclone Batsirai and Tropical Storm Ana in January and February. The research, while noting gaps in data from the region, found that human-caused global warming had played a role in making those storms more intense.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Texas and Mexico snarl traffic at border
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/12/us/texas-mexico-border-inspections-abbott.html
GIST	<p>PHARR, Texas — Trucks attempting to enter Texas loaded with goods from Mexico sat motionless for hours on Tuesday as lengthy vehicle inspections ordered by Gov. Greg Abbott in a clash with the Biden administration over immigration snarled traffic at major commercial crossings.</p> <p>In the city of Pharr, a major international bridge over which about \$12 million in produce is shipped to the United States daily has been effectively shut down in both directions since Monday as scores of drivers in Mexico set up a blockade of their own in protest over the new inspections. A similar protest by truckers also blocked a bridge into El Paso.</p> <p>Since last week, commercial vehicles entering Texas have faced not only the usual federal immigration and customs inspections, but new checkpoints set up by Texas police on the roadway immediately after a measure Mr. Abbott said he was ordering in response to the flow of illegal drugs and human trafficking across the border. With delays stretching up to 14 hours, some drivers have diverted to Arizona and New Mexico.</p> <p>“It’s at crisis level now,” Dante Galeazzi, the president of the Texas International Produce Association, said. “The biggest challenge is that we just don’t know how long this is going to last.”</p> <p>The problems for businesses had been anticipated by the governor when he ordered the inspections and a “zero tolerance” policy for safety violations on commercial vehicles. “This is going to dramatically slow traffic from Mexico into Texas,” Mr. Abbott said last week.</p> <p>But Mr. Abbott said the safety checks were needed to increase oversight at the border, even if state police were not legally authorized to search for migrants or drugs at the checkpoints. “We will use any and all lawful powers to curtail the flow of drugs, human traffickers, illegal immigrants, weapons and other contraband into Texas,” Mr. Abbott has said.</p>

The arrival of migrants is expected to sharply increase next month with the Biden administration's plan to end a Trump-era pandemic policy in which a majority of unauthorized migrants are turned away at the border under an emergency public health order known as Title 42.

Mr. Abbott, a two-term Republican up for re-election in November, has presented the inspections as a means of addressing the anticipated impacts of that termination, which is expected to lead to thousands of additional migrants seeking asylum across the border each day — the largest number of them in Texas.

Mr. Abbott strongly opposes some of the Biden administration's moves to ease Trump-era restrictions on immigration. But because the federal government alone has authority over immigration matters, Mr. Abbott has sought novel strategies to insert the state into immigration enforcement, [such as arresting migrants for misdemeanor trespassing](#). The vehicle inspections are part of that effort: a carefully constructed policy aimed at smugglers and migrants but carried out under powers available to the state, namely vehicle safety.

Mr. Abbott's office did not respond to a request for comment on the growing delays in truck traffic at the border.

In a news release, Customs and Border Protection said delays were being felt at major commercial crossings into Texas as a result of "additional and unnecessary inspections" by state police, leading to a drop in commercial traffic of up to 60 percent.

"This has national ramifications," said John D. Esparza, the chief executive of the Texas Trucking Association. "This is trade going to Ford Motor Company. This is trade going to Minnesota. It's not just about the city of Laredo trying to get stuff to their local H-E-B," he said, referring to the Texas grocery chain.

The association endorsed Mr. Abbott for re-election in February, and Mr. Esparza said he immediately got in touch with the governor's office after the order to express his concerns. "I haven't had a response, quite frankly," he said.

Mexico is the state's largest trading partner, with more than \$100 billion in imports in 2019, according to a report from the Texas Department of Transportation. At one of the busiest crossings, in Laredo, 16,000 trucks ordinarily pass through on a given day, Mr. Esparza said.

In the past, state police have conducted safety checks on a small fraction of the commercial vehicles coming over from Mexico, without dedicated checkpoints. The backups at the border began after Mr. Abbott called for checks on every truck entering from Mexico at certain major crossings.

The blockade on the other side of the border in Pharr, affecting trucks going into and out of Mexico, led to a total halt in truck traffic across the border.

At other major crossings, Mexico-bound trucks have been able to get through, while those bound for the United States back up in a seemingly endless line, moving slowly or not at all. Private vehicle traffic has in most cases remained unaffected.

Beto O'Rourke, the Democratic candidate for governor, attacked Mr. Abbott during a news conference in Pharr on Tuesday, standing with affected business owners in a large and apparently empty cold-storage facility.

"Greg Abbott is killing businesses and the Texas economy with this stunt," Mr. O'Rourke said.

Calls for the governor to end the inspection policy came not just from Democrats. The state's conservative agriculture commissioner, Sid Miller, also urged Mr. Abbott to reverse course.

"You cannot solve a border crisis by creating another crisis at the border," Mr. Miller said in a statement.

Arnoldo Curiel, the general manager of Sunrise Produce in McAllen, said backups at the border had caused customers to cancel orders and left him wondering how much longer he could afford to keep a work force of 150 people. "We're either going to have to let guys go or it's going to cost us to keep paying them," he said.

Mr. Curiel said he had four trucks that should have crossed from Mexico on Friday or Saturday but still had not made it. "They're stuck, they can't cross in Pharr, and they can't go back to Mexico," he said.

The Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge sees about 3,000 commercial crossings a day. That number has dwindled to between 500 and 700 since the inspections began, according to estimates from the National Chamber of Freight Transport, widely known as CANACAR, which represents Mexican trucking companies.

Crossings into the United States are occasionally closed because of weather or clogged by traffic, industry experts said, but the scale of the current delays and the indefinite nature of Mr. Abbott's order left companies on both sides of the border frustrated.

The protest in Mexico began late Monday, when more than 100 drivers began blocking access to the Pharr-Reynosa bridge in protest of the Texas governor's inspection order, said Edgar Zamorano, a delegate with CANACAR.

Mr. Zamorano said he had heard reports of drivers enduring up to 14 hours in line, under an unforgiving sun and without access to bathrooms or food, as a result of the Texas inspections. Some arrived at the bridge before sunrise and did not make it to the U.S. side until 9:30 p.m.

"It is a peaceful protest, to shed light on the inhumane conditions drivers have been enduring," Mr. Zamorano said.

Truck drivers coming from Mexico already undergo rigorous inspections for drugs or people attempting to cross illegally by federal agents in the United States, examinations that can include X-rays and other screenings.

Since last week, Texas state patrol officers have conducted more than 3,400 additional inspections and taken more than 800 vehicles out of service for defective brakes, tires and lighting, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Asked if any of the checks turned up illicit drugs or migrants crossing illegally, the department did not provide any information.

On Tuesday, idling trucks bound for Mexico packed a Stripes gas station in Pharr as drivers waited for instructions from their bosses.

Gilberto Cruz, 54, made it across the bridge last Wednesday, offloading cilantro from Aguascalientes. By Monday morning, he should have been on his way back to Mexico, his truck filled with cotton. Instead, he was met with impossibly long lines on the U.S. side of the border because of the blockade protest in Mexico.

"If I don't work, I don't get paid," Mr. Cruz said. He said some truckers were going to other Texas border cities, including Brownsville and Rio Grande City, "to see if they can cross."

Another trucker from Mexico, Miguel Martinez, 53, said crossing elsewhere was not an option for him. "I would have to pay for the extra diesel, and redo all of the customs paperwork," Mr. Martinez said. He said he earned about \$150 on each leg of the journey, and paid his expenses out of pocket.

	<p>Mr. Martinez said he did not have a problem with the inspections, though he wished that the Texas police would be more respectful of the long wait times truckers have been forced to endure without food, water or bathrooms.</p> <p>“I heard one trucker went into spasms from the heat,” he said. “I think C.B.P. felt bad for us. They were handing out pizza and bottles of water.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 US report: global retreat on human rights
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/12/us/politics/us-report-human-rights.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said on Tuesday that governments around the world, including in Russia and China, grew more repressive last year, as the State Department released its annual report on global human rights.</p> <p>The department’s 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices echoes President Biden’s warnings that authoritarianism is on the rise worldwide. Its introduction cites “continued democratic backsliding on several continents, and creeping authoritarianism that threatens both human rights and democracy — most notably, at present, with Russia’s unprovoked attack on Ukraine.”</p> <p>The report covers the past year and thus does not include details about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February. But it singled out Russia’s government as a leading rights abuser, citing reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, physical abuse of suspects by the police and other offenses, along with frequent impunity for accused security officials.</p> <p>Among the trends Mr. Blinken highlighted was the increasingly brazen way governments were “reaching across borders to threaten and attack critics.” He described a plot to kidnap a journalist in New York that prosecutors said was orchestrated by an intelligence network in Iran, and the Belarusian government’s decision to force a Ryanair passenger flight to land so that security forces could arrest a journalist on board.</p> <p>Some governments were also quick to lock up critics at home, Mr. Blinken said, listing Cuba, Egypt and Russia. More than one million political prisoners are being held in 65 countries, the report found.</p> <p>China’s government “continues to commit genocide and crimes against humanity” against ethnic Uyghurs in Xinjiang and has cracked down on basic freedoms in Hong Kong, Mr. Blinken said.</p> <p>One nation that saw a serious turn for the worse was Afghanistan, whose U.S.-backed government collapsed after Mr. Biden withdrew American forces from the country in August. Mr. Blinken described “a serious erosion of human rights,” including arbitrary detentions of women, protesters and journalists; reprisals against the former government’s security forces; and restrictions on the freedom of women and girls to work and study.</p> <p>But the report also noted that Afghanistan’s “pre-Aug. 15 government,” led by President Ashraf Ghani, was far from an exemplary model. “Widespread disregard for the rule of law and official impunity for those responsible for human rights abuses were common,” it found — a reality that helped the Taliban maintain popular support as they battled back to power.</p> <p>The report included a long list of rights violations in Saudi Arabia, America’s longtime oil-rich authoritarian partner. Among them were “serious abuses” in the conflict in neighboring Yemen, including “civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure as a result of airstrikes.”</p> <p>But in an echo of Saudi protestations about the rationale for the kingdom’s military campaign in Yemen, the report noted that attacks by Houthi militants in Yemen had “caused civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure” in Saudi Arabia.</p>

	<p>One positive sign amid the bleak landscape, Mr. Blinken said, was the successful U.S.-led effort last week to suspend Russia from the United Nations Human Rights Council.</p> <p>“A country that’s perpetrating gross and systemic violations of human rights shouldn’t sit on a body whose job it is to protect those rights,” he said.</p> <p>Mr. Blinken also urged the Senate to confirm Sarah Margon, Mr. Biden’s nominee to be the State Department’s top official for human rights. Ms. Margon, a former official at Human Rights Watch, was nominated nearly a year ago to be the assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor.</p> <p>Although she appeared for a confirmation hearing in September, her nomination remains stalled. The top Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Jim Risch of Idaho, has criticized Ms. Margon for past tweets he depicted as unduly critical of Israel.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Putin limits war aim eastern Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/12/world/europe/putin-donbas-war-russia.html
GIST	<p>President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia said on Tuesday that peace talks with Ukraine had reached a “dead end” and he falsely called the evidence of Russian atrocities in a Kyiv suburb “fake,” using his first extended remarks about the war in nearly a month to insist that Russia would persist in its invasion.</p> <p>Speaking at a news conference at a newly built spaceport in Russia’s Far East, Mr. Putin said that Ukraine’s negotiating position at the talks, last held in Istanbul two weeks ago, was unacceptable. He pledged that Russia’s “military operation will continue until its full completion.”</p> <p>But the operation’s goals, he said, centered on the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russia separatists have been fighting since 2014. It was the first time that Mr. Putin himself had effectively defined a more limited aim for the war, focusing on control of the Donbas — and not all of Ukraine, which Mr. Putin and his subordinates have said should not even be an independent country.</p> <p>“We will act rhythmically and calmly, according to the plan that was initially proposed by the general staff,” Mr. Putin said. “Our goal is to help the people who live in the Donbas, who feel their unbreakable bond with Russia.”</p> <p>Just over a month ago, by contrast, Mr. Putin warned that Ukraine’s leaders risked “the future of Ukrainian statehood” by resisting the Russian invasion, which Kremlin military planners appeared to have mistakenly thought could be achieved with relative ease.</p> <p>Still, Mr. Putin’s assertion of Russia’s more limited war aims in Ukraine cannot necessarily be taken at face value, and he may yet harbor an ultimate goal of taking control of the former Soviet republic. For months leading up to the Feb. 24 invasion, as Russian forces massed on Ukraine’s border, Russian officials insisted there were no plans to invade and that the buildup was merely a military exercise.</p> <p>Ukrainian and Western officials have said they expect that Russia, having failed to seize the capital Kyiv and most other key cities in an invasion hampered by poor logistics, would soon mount an intense offensive in the Donbas, where the Russian military has been pouring in troops.</p> <p>But almost seven weeks into the war, the Russians have yet to conquer Mariupol, the strategically important southern Donbas port that has come to symbolize the death and destruction wrought by the invaders so far. Western officials said they were evaluating unverified accounts that Russian forces may have dropped chemical weapons on a Mariupol steel mill that has become a bastion of Ukrainian army resistance. The use of chemical weapons is a war crime.</p> <p>President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, referring to the unverified accounts from Mariupol, said he took them “as seriously as possible.”</p>

“Even during the Second World War, the Donbas did not see such cruelty in such a short period of time,” Mr. Zelensky said in a video released early Wednesday. “And from who? From Russian troops.”

Russian forces also have repeatedly fired missiles and artillery indiscriminately at civilian targets they have little or no hope of taking, including those in and around the eastern city of Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second largest. On Tuesday, New York Times journalists witnessed the aftermath of a Russian cluster munitions attack on a Kharkiv suburb that left a trail of casualties, craters and punctured roofs.

And the outside pressure on Mr. Putin continued to rise. On Tuesday evening, Ukraine’s security service said it had detained Viktor Medvedchuk, a pro-Russian oligarch and politician who is Mr. Putin’s closest ally in Ukraine, releasing a photo of him handcuffed and disheveled. President Biden took a new swipe at Mr. Putin, calling him a “dictator” who has committed “genocide,” and a U.S. official said the White House would soon announce new military assistance for Ukraine worth \$750 million.

Mr. Putin’s appearance on Tuesday — coming after several weeks in which the public glimpsed the Russian leader mainly in Kremlin footage showing him holding meetings by videoconference — appeared intended to shore up domestic support for a war with no clear end in sight.

Marking Cosmonauts’ Day — the anniversary of the Soviet Cold War triumph in which Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space — Mr. Putin used the new spaceport, the Vostochny Cosmodrome, as his stage.

He was accompanied to the spaceport by President Aleksandr G. Lukashenko of Belarus, Mr. Putin’s closest ally, an apparent reminder to Russians that they were not completely isolated in the war.

Mr. Putin parried a question from a Russian journalist about the atrocities in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha by retreating into his familiar arguments about Western “double standards.” He claimed that the world had been silent when the United States bombed Syria in the campaign against the Islamic State, and that Mr. Lukashenko had provided evidence that the scenes in Bucha were an orchestrated, British “provocation.”

“We discussed in detail this psychological special operation that the English carried out,” Mr. Lukashenko said in a news conference alongside Mr. Putin, referring to Bucha.

In fact, independent investigators, including journalists for The New York Times, have documented evidence of numerous execution-style killings, rapes and acts of torture against civilians in Bucha that had been carried out by Russian occupation troops before they retreated last month.

But inside Russia, Mr. Putin’s pronouncements are going increasingly unchallenged, with access to Facebook and Instagram and many independent news websites blocked, and a draconian wartime censorship law punishing any deviation from the Kremlin line with as much as 15 years in prison. While prices are rising and layoffs loom as Western companies pull out of Russia, there has been no sign yet of widespread public discontent, and pollsters see significant public support for the war.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Ukraine: political ally of Putin ‘detained’
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/12/world/europe/ukraine-viktor-medvedchuk-putin-ally.html
GIST	<p>Ukraine’s security service said on Tuesday that officers had detained Viktor Medvedchuk, a politician and oligarch seen as the Kremlin’s main agent of influence in Ukraine in recent years.</p> <p>Mr. Medvedchuk disappeared shortly after the start of the war and the Ukrainian authorities were searching for him.</p> <p>Ivan Bakanov, the head of the Security Service of Ukraine, said on Facebook that officers had conducted a “lightning-fast and dangerous multilevel special operation” to detain Mr. Medvedchuk.</p>

	<p>Dmitri S. Peskov, the Kremlin’s spokesman, said he could not confirm that Mr. Medvedchuk had been arrested, according to Russian state media. President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine posted a photo on Telegram that appeared to show Mr. Medvedchuk in handcuffs.</p> <p>Mr. Medvedchuk’s arrest would be a significant blow to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, who is reported to be the godfather to Mr. Medvedchuk’s daughter and counts him as one of his closest allies in Ukraine.</p> <p>A longtime influential player in politics and business between Ukraine and Russia, he was an adviser in the office of President Leonid Kuchma after Ukraine’s independence and took part in negotiations with separatists in eastern Ukraine after Russia’s annexation of Crimea.</p> <p>Before the war, Mr. Medvedchuk had been under house arrest on suspicion of treason, attempted looting of national resources and aiding and abetting a terrorist organization, according to local media.</p> <p>A Ukrainian official, Mykhailo Podolyak, a member of Ukraine’s delegation for peace talks in Istanbul, said on Twitter that Mr. Medvedchuk had “regularly lied about the situation” in Ukraine, and “stole money and eventually became one of the initiators of the war.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 April snowfall around Puget Sound
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/weather/more-april-snow-falling-around-puget-sound/DHEFTUWEFEJ5LRKLY2PEVXVK4/
GIST	<p>THE HIGHLIGHTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold again early tomorrow with rain and snow showers, no significant accumulation expected. • Milder temperatures with rising snow levels toward the end of the week. • Looking drier for Easter before more rain and mountain snow next week. <p>There are still some pockets of wet snow and light rain Tuesday evening, particularly around Everett. I don’t expect accumulation but some grassy surfaces could whiten up for a bit. Also, there will be some frost in the morning in spots.</p> <p>Overnight, we’ll see an overall decrease in the amount of rain/snow around the region but some pockets of precipitation are likely to persist into the morning. Temperatures will be near freezing in many spots so some snowfall could be seen to begin Wednesday.</p> <p>As has been the case, little to no accumulation is expected, though some grassy surfaces could whiten up for a time. These locations of minor accumulation Wednesday morning will be isolated and will melt pretty quickly during the morning hours.</p> <p>On Wednesday afternoon, expect some passing showers of mainly rain with highs in the 40s to near 50. The chance for thunderstorms will be lower than Tuesday.</p> <p>On Thursday and Friday, occasional spotty showers of rain will be likely in the lowlands with some minor mountain snow. Some wet snowflakes could be seen in a few spots but don’t expect any accumulation.</p> <p>Saturday will likely be a rainier day (especially in the afternoon) with highs in the 40s to low 50s. Easter Sunday could be drier but we might still have a few light showers early in the day with highs in the 50s. Expect some rain early next week with some mountain snow.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Seattle rent increased nearly 19%
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SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/report-seattle-rent-increased-nearly-19-year-over-year/LMUY74T3FRF5FNEWTG2KBKMJQ4/
GIST	<p>Average rent in Seattle has increased by 18.9% compared to the same time last year, according to a report from Apartment List.</p> <p>For April 2022, the average rent in Seattle for a one-bedroom apartment is \$1,681 and \$2,097 for a two-bedroom.</p> <p>The 18.9% increase for Seattle is more than the state average of 17.8%, as well as the national average of 17.1%.</p> <p>Areas around Seattle all have similar increases, with Bellevue the most expensive, with average rent growth of 20.9% over the past year.</p> <p>The least expensive rent is in Lakewood, where the two-bedroom average is \$1,540.</p> <p>Over the past month, Tacoma is the only measured city around Seattle that has seen rent fall, with a decline of 0.2%.</p> <p>Compared to most large cities across the country, Seattle is the least affordable for renters.</p> <p>The \$2,097 rent for a two-bedroom in Seattle is higher than the national average of \$1,306.</p> <p>While Seattle's 18.9% may appear to be high, other cities have seen higher increases, year over year.</p> <p>New York City rent grew 33.3%, Phoenix increased 25.4% and Austin, Texas went up 22.6%.</p>
Return to Top	For the complete Apartment List report, click here .

HEADLINE	04/12 Spokane Co. median home price hits record
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/money/economy/boomtown-inland-northwest/spokane-county-home-price-record/293-cb95ed58-3b92-49a6-9273-1887de9b286e
GIST	<p>SPOKANE COUNTY, Wash. — Home prices in Spokane County continue to rise to record levels and now the market is starting to pick up too.</p> <p>A new monthly report from the Spokane Association of Realtors revealed the median sales price in Spokane County hit \$429,998 in March, shattering a record set just one month prior. From February to March, the median price increased 7.7%, while the median price is up 26.3% from the same time in 2021.</p> <p>While the record prices are certainly noteworthy in this boomtown, it is not unexpected. Prices have been steadily increasing since 2011.</p> <p>Tom Hormel, President-Elect of Washington Realtors previously told KREM 2 the median price can be deceiving, depending on the inventory that closed in any given month.</p> <p>"It's a view of the market in a one-month cycle," Hormel said.</p> <p>Some good news for buyers is a big increase in the number of homes on the market. The inventory in March was up 26% compared to February and closed sales jumped 54.8% in the past month.</p> <p>That being said, the inventory is still extremely low.</p> <p>The Spokane Association of Realtors reported the housing inventory dropped to just half-a-months' worth in March. A healthy level is considered a 5-and-a-half month's supply.</p>

	<p>Homes that are hitting the market are selling quickly, with the median number of days on the market at just four.</p> <p>"Buyers are outpacing sellers," Hormel told KREM 2 last month. "As long as that keeps happening median sales will fluctuate and go up."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Seattle council mulls police hiring bonuses
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/we-need-to-level-the-playing-field-seattle-city-council-debates-hiring-bonuses-for-city-staff-outside-spd
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Hiring bonuses and retention pay for Seattle police officers are developing into political theater between the City Council, the mayor's office and the police union.</p> <p>The Public Safety Committee on Tuesday heard from the city's main recruiter about the issues of retaining and hiring staff, a problem which goes beyond just police officers.</p> <p>Some council members expressed their desire to offer hiring bonuses to city departments that are also suffering a staff shortage.</p> <p>Since January 2020, 401 officers (nearly 30% of sworn officers on the force), have separated from the department. Since then, the department has hired 145 officers, resulting in a net loss of 256 officers. So far in 2022, 44 officers have left and only 13 have been hired.</p> <p>Last year, then-Mayor Jenny Durkan issued an executive order to create hiring bonuses, all in an effort to recruit new officers and keep others from leaving the department. That bonus was only funded by the City Council through 2021. Bonuses were inadvertently offered to new hires at the start of 2022, and the council agreed to pay those in February.</p> <p>The city no longer offers a hiring bonus and never offered a retention bonus, the opposite of what neighboring cities and King County are doing.</p> <p>"Most cities, if not all cities in our region, do have this, and it's been said we need to level the playing field for offering our officers this. Otherwise, we are going to lose them to other departments," said council member Sara Nelson.</p> <p>The range of bonus pay for a lateral move in our region ranges from \$15,000 to \$30,000. In Seattle, that move is \$0.</p> <p>Nelson is asking the council to back a resolution she's sponsoring to support a staffing incentive program for Seattle Police.</p> <p>The centerpiece of Tuesday's discussion was a two-page report by the city's Human Resources Department, made at the request of the Mayor and council member Lisa Herbold, the chairperson of the Public Safety Committee.</p> <p>The report said the success of hiring bonuses for Seattle Police was inconclusive.</p> <p>"It's not clear for SPD that the bonuses resulted in more people applying," said Herbold.</p> <p>The report said many jobs in the city were in need of workers, including carpenters, HVAC technicians, plumbers, truck drivers, cashiers, inspectors and veterinarians.</p> <p>"It's not just retention strategies in just one department, given there's been a lot of focus on [Seattle Police], it's retention and recruitment strategies in every single department," said council member Teresa Mosqueda.</p>

	<p>Councilmember Andrew Lewis suggested the city look beyond its borders for a solution.</p> <p>"I'd like to know what major American city is actually able to hire officers, right now, at a rate higher than the attrition of losing, and see whatever that city is doing can work here," said Lewis.</p> <p>The meeting was intended to be informational only. The committee could vote on Nelson's resolution in two weeks.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Candidates King Co. sheriff vie for top job
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/candidates-for-king-county-sheriff-stress-community-engagement-as-they-vie-for-top-job/
GIST	<p>The finalists to be King County's next sheriff answered questions from the media Tuesday, discussing how they would engage with the community and lead a department of about 800 officers, but one that has struggled to recruit recently and has been involved in a spate of fatal shootings.</p> <p>All three finalists, even the current interim sheriff, presented themselves as a shift from the status quo who could bring cultural change to the department.</p> <p>King County Executive Dow Constantine will pick the next sheriff from among the three finalists (12 people applied for the job, in a nationwide search), and his choice must be approved by the Metropolitan King County Council.</p> <p>The finalists are interim King County Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall, who has been the leader since Jan. 1, after a 30-year career in and out of law enforcement; Charles Kimble, chief of police in Killeen, Texas, who has spent three decades working for police departments across the country; and Reginald Moorman, a major in the Atlanta Police Department, where he has spent his 21-year career.</p> <p>Constantine plans to make his choice in May, with council approval likely coming by the summer.</p> <p>The three candidates spoke, consecutively, via Zoom with reporters Tuesday.</p> <p>The Sheriff's Office has had to pay several multimillion-dollar settlements in recent years after fatal shootings by deputies. The county's Office of Law Enforcement Oversight has repeatedly found fault in how the department has handled the shootings.</p> <p>All three candidates stressed their ability, either as an outsider, or as a nontraditional candidate, to change the department's culture.</p> <p>"I'm not the status quo," said Cole-Tindall, 57, who's spent most of her career outside of law enforcement. "I am a nontraditional law enforcement executive. I didn't come up through the ranks, my lens is different."</p> <p>Kimble, 52, said that just as important as an organization's internal culture is how that culture is viewed by the outside community.</p> <p>"It's always good to have an outside look, someone that has a different perspective," Kimble said. "Find out where I as a sheriff can mend some of those issues between the public and the deputies."</p> <p>Moorman, 43, said the department needed to "embrace the community."</p> <p>"Getting out in the community, community engagement, and also looking at what we've done right, what we've done where we can improve and make sure that we have the adequate training on de-escalation," he said.</p>

For [nearly a decade](#), elected officials in King County have been pushing for sheriff's deputies to wear body cameras to increase transparency, especially in police shootings. Both the county's elected sheriffs over that time have said they agreed.

But deputies still do not wear body cameras and cruisers still do not have dashboard cameras, even as the Seattle Police Department and [smaller municipal departments](#) have implemented body camera programs.

A pilot program last year put body cameras on 10 deputies for three months, but the results of the trial have not been released.

All three candidates said sheriff's deputies should be wearing body cameras, but there remains no firm timeline. The issue must be collectively bargained with the union representing sergeants and deputies. Cole-Tindall said they are looking at putting body cameras in the 2023-24 budget.

Cole-Tindall, when [her interim appointment was announced in November](#), said she would not be a candidate for the permanent job, because it "would distract from the work" she needed to do as interim leader.

On Tuesday, she said she changed her mind after beginning the job and speaking with employees of the department.

"I received many, many requests, wouldn't I reconsider," Cole-Tindall said. "That our staff were starting to feel hopeful, and the sheriff's office was turning around to be an agency that they wanted to be part of."

In February, she said, she decided to put her name in and, with Constantine's blessing, applied just before the deadline.

Cole-Tindall began her career as a law enforcement officer in 1991 with the Washington State Gambling Commission. But she then worked in various other positions in state and county government (investigating unemployment fraud, community corrections, labor relations), before joining the sheriff's department in 2015. She is a commissioned, but not certified, law enforcement officer. If she is chosen as the permanent sheriff, she said, she would have to re-complete the state's 19-week basic law enforcement academy.

Kimble has been police chief of Killeen since 2017. He began his career as a police officer in his hometown of Milwaukee. When his wife, who was in the Army, was stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, he got a job as an officer in nearby Fayetteville, where he moved up the ranks of the city's police department. He was police chief for Fayetteville State University and Spring Lake, North Carolina, before moving to Killeen.

He shrugged off the difference in size between Killeen, population 145,000, and King County, population, 2.2 million, noting Killeen is the hub of a metro area of nearly 500,000.

"Leadership is the same no matter what size the department is; management strategies are still the same," he said. "Your core values of honesty, integrity and fairness and hard working, those things are still the same."

Moorman stressed his experience overseeing busy, high-profile locations, such as Atlanta's airport and pro football stadium, where he was the senior officer.

As police departments across the country struggle to recruit new officers to fill their ranks, he said he would focus on retaining officers first. He said while police departments often do a good job training new recruits and upper command, training for midlevel management can be neglected.

"You have to treat your people well and focus on the supervision that they receive," Moorman said.

	<p>“People, they don’t leave the jobs, they leave the supervisors. And so when you have those supervisors, you want to make sure that they have the skills that they need to retain talent.”</p> <p>King County voters in 2020 voted to make sheriff an appointed, rather than elected, position for the first time in more than a quarter century.</p> <p>Part of the rationale for switching sheriff to an appointed position was that it would allow the county to conduct a much broader search. When it was an elected position, candidates were limited to those living in the area and, in practice, to those already working in the Sheriff’s Office.</p> <p>There will also be at least two public forums with the three finalists, held virtually. The first will be at 6 p.m. Monday, and the second at 9 a.m. April 21.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Welcome back to the office; isn’t this fun?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/12/technology/rto-return-office-technology.html
GIST	<p>When Google employees returned to their mostly empty offices this month, they were told to relax. Office time should be “not only productive but also fun.” Explore the place a little. Don’t book back-to-back meetings.</p> <p>Also, don’t forget to attend the private show by Lizzo, one of the hottest pop stars in the country. If that’s not enough, the company is also planning “pop-up events” that will feature “every Googler’s favorite duo: food and swag.”</p> <p>But Google employees in Boulder, Colorado, were still reminded of what they were giving up when the company gave them mouse pads with the image of a sad-eyed cat. Underneath the pet was a plea: “You’re not going to RTO, right?”</p> <p>RTO, for return to office, is an abbreviation born of the pandemic. It is a recognition of how COVID-19 forced many companies to abandon office buildings and empty cubicles. The pandemic proved that being in the office does not necessarily equal greater productivity, and some firms continued to thrive without meeting in person.</p> <p>Now, after two years of video meetings and Slack chats, many companies are eager to get employees back to their desks. The employees, however, may be not be so eager for a return to morning commutes, communal bathrooms and daytime outfits that are not athletic wear.</p> <p>So tech companies with money to burn and offices to fill are rolling out the fun wagon, even as they make clear that in many cases returning to the office — at least a few days a week — is mandatory.</p> <p>Lizzo will perform for Google employees this month at an amphitheater near the company’s headquarters in Mountain View, California. When Microsoft reopened its offices in Redmond in late February, employees were treated to music from local bands, beer and wine tasting, and even classes for making terrariums.</p> <p>To mark its first official week back at the office, chipmaker Qualcomm held a happy hour with its CEO, Cristiano Amon, at its San Diego offices for several thousand employees with free food, drinks and T-shirts. The company also started offering weekly events such as pop-up snack stands on “Take a Break Tuesday” and group fitness classes for “Wellness Wednesday.”</p> <p>“These celebrations and perks are a recognition by companies that they know employees don’t want to come back to the office, certainly not as frequently as before,” said Adam Galinsky, a professor at Columbia University’s business school. At least for now, he added, companies are opting for the carrot over the stick: rewarding workers for coming into the office rather than punishing them for staying home.</p>

Before COVID struck, the biggest technology firms committed billions of dollars to erect offices that are marvels of architecture and trophies of financial success. Those gleaming offices, packed with amenities and perks, are a testament to the long-held belief that in-person collaboration is still better for fostering creativity, inspiring innovation and instilling a common sense of purpose.

But for many employees who enjoyed the freedom of working remotely, the return to office — no matter how fancy — carries a touch of end-of-summer, back-to-school dread. Few, it seems, are keen on going back five days a week.

On Memegen, an internal company site where Google employees share memes, one of the most popular posts was a picture of a company cafeteria with a caption: “RTO is just bumping into each other and saying ‘we must grab lunch soon’ until one of you quits Google.”

Nick Bloom, an economics professor at Stanford University who surveys 5,000 workers every month, said most wanted to return to the office two or three times per week. One-third never want to return to the office and prefer to remain remote.

Just by eliminating the office commute, Bloom said, the average worker will save one hour a day, so “you can see why employees are not going to start coming to work for free bagels or to play Ping-Pong.” The main draw for heading to the office, according to the surveys, is that employees want to see colleagues in person.

After a number of postponements, Google kicked off its hybrid work schedule April 4, requiring most employees to show up at U.S. offices a few days a week. Apple started easing staff back to the office Monday, with workers expected to check in at the office once a week at first.

On March 31, David Radcliffe, Google’s vice president of real estate and workplace services, sent an email to San Francisco Bay Area employees saying the company wanted to make the return to office “truly special.”

For years, Google has provided employees with Wi-Fi-equipped luxury buses to make commutes more productive and comfortable, but it’s going a step further. It is starting a program to reimburse \$49 monthly leases for an electric scooter as part of its transportation options for staff. Google also plans to start experimenting with different office designs to adapt to changing work styles.

When Microsoft employees returned to their offices in February as part of a hybrid work schedule, they were greeted with “appreciation events” and lawn games such as cornhole and life-size chess. There were classes for spring basket making and canvas painting. The campus pub transformed into a beer, wine and “mocktail” garden.

And, of course, there was free food and drink: pizzas, sandwiches and specialty coffees. Microsoft paid for food trucks with offerings including fried chicken, tacos, gyros, Korean food and barbecue.

Unlike other technology companies, Microsoft expects employees to pay for their own food at the office. One employee marveled at how big a draw the free food was.

The challenge for companies, Bloom said, is how to balance flexibility in letting workers set their own schedule with a more heavy-handed approach of forcing them to come in on specific days to maximize the usefulness of office time.

He said companies should focus on developing the right approach to hybrid work instead of wasting time and effort on showering employees with inducements like private concerts.

“Employees aren’t going to come in regularly just for the frills,” Bloom said. “What are you going to do next? Get Justin Bieber and then Katy Perry?”

Fitting of Apple's more restrained workplace, its employees said they did not expect — nor had they heard of — any celebrations for returning to the office. At first, Apple is asking employees to come once a week. By late May, Apple is requiring them to come in on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.

When Apple announced its return-to-office plan last year before another COVID surge forced a delay, more than 1,000 employees signed a letter urging management to be more open to flexible work arrangements. It was a rare show of dissent from the company's rank and file, who historically have been less willing to openly challenge executives on workplace matters.

But as tech companies grapple with offering employees greater work flexibility, the firms are also scaling back some office perks.

Meta, formerly known as Facebook, told employees last month that it was cutting back or eliminating free services like laundry and dry cleaning. Google, like some other companies, has said it approved requests from thousands of employees to work remotely or transfer to a different office. But if employees move to a less expensive location, Google is cutting pay, arguing that it has always factored in where a person was hired in setting compensation. Clio, a legal software company in Burnaby, B.C., won't force its employees back to the office. But last week, it gave a party at its offices.

There was upbeat music. There was an asymmetrical balloon sculpture in Clio's signature bright blue, dark blue, coral and white — perfect for selfies. One of Clio's best-known workers donned a safari costume to give tours of the facility. At 2 p.m., the company held a cupcake social.

To make its workspaces feel more like home, the company moved desks to the perimeter, allowing Clions — what the company calls its employees — to gaze out at the office complex's cherry blossoms while banging out emails. A foosball table was upgraded to a workstation with chairs on either end “so you could have a meeting while playing foosball with your laptop on it,” said Natalie Archibald, Clio's vice president of people.

Clio's Burnaby office, which employs 350, is open at only half-capacity. Spaced-out desks must be reserved, and employees got red, yellow and green lanyards to convey their comfort levels with handshakes.

Only around 60 people came in that Monday. “To be able to have an IRL laugh rather than an emoji response,” Archibald said. “People are just excited for that.”

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HEADLINE	04/12 Pandemic kids lack basic life skills
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/04/12/pandemic-kids-shoe-tying-social-emotional/
GIST	<p>In a normal year, up to half of Christine Jarboe's first-graders start school knowing how to tie their shoelaces.</p> <p>But thanks to the coronavirus pandemic, school hasn't been normal for more than two years. So when Jarboe welcomed a fresh crop of Virginia first-graders to her classroom this fall for their first full year of in-person learning, she made a disturbing discovery.</p> <p>“You'd say, ‘OK, can you show me how to tie your shoes?’ and most of them would just kind of look at me, like, really confused,” Jarboe said. “They really weren't sure even where to start.”</p> <p>It was one of many “missing skills” that Jarboe discovered among her students over the course of the semester. She expected them to show up behind where they should be in academic categories such as reading. But what she hadn't counted on was that her children would prove unable to do things such as cutting along a dotted line with scissors. Or squeeze a glue bottle to release an appropriately sized dot. Or simply twist a plastic cap off and on.</p>

In interviews with The Washington Post, teachers around the country shared that they were confronting similar problems, dealing with pre-kindergartners, kindergartners and elementary-school students — as well as some middle-schoolers — who arrived unprepared for the school environment. Online learning left children, on average, four months behind in mathematics and reading before this school year, according to a McKinsey and Company study released in early April.

But children of the pandemic also are missing a more basic tool kit of behaviors, life skills and strategies, including tying their shoelaces, taking turns on the playground slide and sitting still in their chairs for hours at a time.

“There’s a huge gap that goes beyond the academics, it has to do with social and emotional components and just how to behave in school,” said Dan Domenech, the executive director of the American Association of School Administrators. “That is something young kids have not learned.”

As these issues persist well into the 2021-2022 school year, frazzled teachers — who know they must address basic behavioral challenges before they can begin to make up academic losses — are becoming creative.

A New York City elementary school imported “non-traditional” seats, including squishy red beanbags, that allow children to wriggle and squirm during lessons. Staffers at an elementary school in Oakland, Calif., weary of conflicts during recess, are training fourth- and fifth-graders as “safety leaders” to mediate between peers. And in Philadelphia, two teachers created a “literacy buddy room” in which fifth-graders and kindergartners pair off to read together, building literacy and relational skills at the same time.

In Virginia’s Fairfax County, Jarboe has kicked off a weekly shoelace tying contest. She provides laces to students who wear Velcro or slip-on footwear, and hands out small hourglass sand timers so children can time themselves. Since Jarboe began the competition two months ago, improvement has been rapid: As of early April, 17 of her 20 students have learned to fashion and dismember double knots with aplomb.

On a recent Thursday morning, 6-year-old Lucy Massey, wearing a pink headband, pulled a foot up to the seat of her plastic chair. She bent over a pink Converse and gripped the two ends of a hot pink lace.

“Count me off,” she told two friends, and the girls began reciting, “One ... two ... three ... “

Lucy’s fingers flew: First the left shoe, then the right. She blew a strand of hair from her forehead. Her friends chanted, “20 ... 21 ... 22 ...”

“Twenty-four!” cried Lucy, triumphant, pointing to two perfect double knots and raising both hands for a star athlete’s fist pump. “Pretty good, huh?”

— — —

Jenna Spear first noticed problems during story time.

Spear works as a teacher-naturalist for the Harris Center for Conservation Education in New Hampshire, visiting K-5 public schools in the state’s Monadnock region to educate students about nature. After a pandemic-imposed hiatus, she began visiting classrooms again this school year, offering lessons on topics as varied as birding and cartography.

Early on, she was watching a second-grade read-aloud when children began crushing forward, competing to be closest to the book. Spear sat back, feeling sad.

“Normally, when you read a story in second-grade, kids know to sit down so everyone can see the pictures,” Spear said. “But you’d have kids standing in front, like right in front, of everybody.”

As the year continued, she observed other patterns. Children easily grew frustrated with one another in group settings. They struggled with the concept of taking turns, pushing each other out of the way to see a caterpillar she was holding in her palm. And, when Spears walked the children into the woods for her traditional “quiet minute challenge,” they were unable to stay still and silent for even 30 seconds.

Frank Keil, a Yale professor of psychology who studies how children interpret the world, said these kinds of issues are to be expected after the nation’s youngest students were deprived of more than a year of in-person instruction. “A huge part of early schooling in the U.S. is being socialized, learning to sit still and listen quietly,” he said.

Being away from other children affected students from all socioeconomic backgrounds, Keil added: “Even affluent children coming from families in which dynamic back-and-forth conversations with peers and adults are the norm may need time to learn how to sit still and be more passive learners.”

In California’s Oakland Unified School District, principal Roma Groves-Waters said her first weeks and months overseeing Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School this school year were dotted with small troubles.

She said “little bickerings and fights” broke out on the playground far more often than happened before the pandemic. Spats happened in the classroom, too, as children were forced to sit alongside peers for six hours in a row. Hybrid learning, Groves-Waters noted, required 2½ hours of continuous attention at most.

Things were especially difficult for incoming first-graders, she said. For these students, who had never before set foot in a school, the concept of walking in a line between classes — while refraining from touching other children nearby — was wholly foreign.

“Also, the idea of not talking out of turn, it’s like, ‘Wait for your turn! You’ll get a turn!’” Groves-Waters said. “Those poor teachers, they really felt the effects of the pandemic.”

Things are improving, she said, in part because the school started holding meditation and yoga sessions before and after lunch and recess to help children unwind. And Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary teachers trained fourth- and fifth-graders as safety leaders, instructing them in the principles of mediation.

“They help resolve the student conflicts,” Groves-Waters said, “because kids talk to each other better.”

Behavioral issues, albeit of a different kind, also are arising among older students.

Sean O’Mara, who teaches eighth-grade social studies at Keene Middle School in New Hampshire, said his students this year have no idea how to carry on a class discussion. Many — more than before the pandemic — prefer to work independently and are reluctant to share their ideas with others, much less venture into a discussion.

O’Mara thinks this is a legacy of online learning.

“During Zoom meetings, a lot of kids would not want to turn their cameras on, so they sort of retreated into anonymity,” he said. “There is still a segment of our students who would prefer to be quiet and [be] observers.”

In response, he devoted class time to explaining how conversations work: What body language signals, what to be thinking about while someone else is talking, how to offer civil disagreement. At the start of the year, he spent up to 20 minutes per class per day on these instructions. Now, as his students get “into a groove,” he can get by with a brief reminder.

“But we’re heading toward the end of the year,” he said. “My eighth-graders have to transition into high school ... before they ever really got to know what it means to be a middle-schooler.”

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Amy Barker, a kindergarten teacher at Robert Morris School in Philadelphia, had an idea this fall for tackling reading and behavioral problems in one swoop. Under the “Reading Buddy Program,” begun in September, Barker’s 13 kindergartners spend a half-hour every Friday afternoon reading books with teacher Jessica Scherff’s 13 fifth-graders. The students pair off and, taking turns, pick their way through whatever text they choose.

“It’s sharing the love of reading, getting kids to really enjoy sitting down with a book instead of their phone,” Scherff said.

“And it’s building the fifth-graders’ skills,” Barker added. “Without knowing it, they’re working on their literacy, and their comprehension, because the kindergartners are constantly asking them to explain.”

Both teachers said their students’ reading fluency has improved, the fifth-graders’ especially. And Tameron Dancy, the school principal, said the program has helped the older students gain social skills as well as self-esteem.

“When our older students are able to meet with, kind of take responsibility for, the younger ones, it just more rapidly develops that sense of leadership and responsibility in them,” she said.

The children also have become good friends, with the fifth-graders rushing to help the kindergartners open their milk cartons at breakfast. The program is going so well, Dancy said, that she wants to expand it to include first- and sixth-graders next fall.

And in Virginia’s Fairfax County, Jill Norris, a reading specialist at Stratford Landing Elementary, came up with her own way of teaching children that school should be enjoyable — adding a sprinkling of life skills along the way.

Norris, who enjoyed trading letters with her grandmother when she was a girl, turned her classroom into a post office. She placed a mailbox outside and promised students that if they left a letter in the box, she’d have a reply for them by next morning.

Norris has kept her promise, even though it has sometimes required up to two hours of letter writing in a night. She said the children’s handwriting and the substance of their letters have improved markedly over the course of the year.

“Dear ms. norris,” wrote a fifth-grade girl in a recent letter. “I know you need a Design for the readIng room i got a iDea you ShouD Paint it [with pictures of] Book’s.”

“Dear Mrs. Norris,” wrote another student, a fourth-grade girl. “My Favorite Kind of books are grapic novels and I sometimes like Chapter books.”

“Dear Mrs. Norris,” wrote a second-grade boy, above a drawing of a cat. “I Love You.”

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HEADLINE	04/12 US annual death toll highest ever
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/covid-19-overdoses-pushed-us-to-highest-death-total-ever/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — 2021 was the deadliest year in U.S. history, and new data and research are offering more insights into how it got that bad.</p> <p>The main reason for the increase in deaths? COVID-19, said Robert Anderson, who oversees the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s work on death statistics.</p>

The agency this month quietly updated its provisional death tally. It showed there were 3.465 million deaths last year, or about 80,000 more than 2020's record-setting total.

Early last year, some experts were optimistic that 2021 would not be as bad as the first year of the pandemic — partly because effective COVID-19 vaccines had finally become available.

“We were wrong, unfortunately,” said Noreen Goldman, a Princeton University researcher.

COVID-19 deaths rose in 2021 — to more than 415,000, up from 351,000 the year before — as new coronavirus variants emerged and an unexpectedly large numbers of Americans refused to get vaccinated or were hesitant to wear masks, experts said.

The coronavirus is not solely to blame. Preliminary CDC data also shows the crude death rate for cancer rose slightly, and rates continued to increase for diabetes, chronic liver disease and stroke.

Drug overdose deaths also continued to rise. The CDC does not yet have a tally for 2021 overdose deaths, because it can take weeks of lab work and investigation to identify them. But provisional data through October suggests the nation is on track to see at least 105,000 overdose deaths in 2021 — up from 93,000 the year before.

New research released Tuesday showed a particularly large jump in overdose deaths among 14- to 18-year-olds.

Adolescent overdose death counts were fairly constant for most of the last decade, at around 500 a year, according to the paper published by the Journal of the American Medical Association. They almost doubled in 2020, to 954, and the researchers estimated that the total hit nearly 1,150 last year.

Joseph Friedman, a UCLA researcher who was the paper's lead author, called the spike “unprecedented.”

Those teen overdose deaths were only around 1% of the U.S. total. But adolescents experienced a greater relative increase than the overall population, even though surveys suggest drug use among teens is down.

Experts attributed the spike to fentanyl, a highly lethal drug that has been cut into heroin for several years. More recently it's also been pressed into counterfeit pills resembling prescription drugs that teens sometimes abuse.

The total number of U.S. deaths often increases year to year as the U.S. population grows. But 2020 and 2021 saw extraordinary jumps in death numbers and rates, due largely to the pandemic.

Those national death trends affect life expectancy — an estimate of the average number of years a baby born in a given year might expect to live.

With rare exceptions, U.S. life expectancy has reliably inched up year after year. But the CDC's life expectancy estimate for 2020 was about 77 years — more than a year and a half lower than what it was in 2019.

The CDC has not yet reported its calculation for 2021. But Goldman and some other researchers have been making their own estimates, presented in papers that have not yet been published in peer-reviewed journals.

Those researchers think U.S. life expectancy dropped another five or six months in 2021 — putting it back to where it was 20 years ago.

A loss of more than two years of life expectancy over the last two years “is mammoth,” Goldman said.

	<p>One study looked at death data in the U.S. and 19 other high-income countries. The U.S. fared the worst.</p> <p>“What happened in the U.S. is less about the variants than the levels of resistance to vaccination and the public’s rejection of practices, such as masking and mandates, to reduce viral transmission,” one of the study’s authors, Dr. Steven Woolf of Virginia Commonwealth University, said in a statement.</p> <p>Some experts are skeptical that life expectancy will quickly bounce back. They worry about long-term complications of COVID-19 that may hasten the deaths of people with chronic health problems.</p> <p>Preliminary — and incomplete — CDC data suggest there were at least 805,000 U.S. deaths in about the first three months of this year. That’s well below the same period last year, but higher than the comparable period in 2020.</p> <p>“We may end up with a ‘new normal’ that’s a little higher than it was before,” Anderson said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Pierce Co. escaped eviction ‘tidal wave’
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/tacoma/pierce-county-eviction-moratorium-rental-assistance-evictions-wave/281-a8fd1833-eabd-4abd-9403-5074d9767140
GIST	<p>PIERCE COUNTY, Wash. — Before the COVID-19 eviction moratorium expired last fall, Pierce County had more people facing eviction than anywhere else in the state. Many were anticipating a surge of evictions to hit the county and other areas of Washington.</p> <p>“It was a big question mark back then because everyone was predicting this tsunami, this so-called tidal wave of evictions,” said Mark Morzol, the managing attorney for the Housing Justice Project with Tacomaprobono Community Lawyers.</p> <p>The organization is the sole provider of right-to-counsel services for Pierce County. They represent all low-income tenants in the county going through eviction proceedings.</p> <p>“Back then the key question was, what impact is rental assistance going to have on this entire situation?” said Morzol.</p> <p>A few months later, however, evictions are lower in the county than in an average, pre-pandemic year. Data suggest the rental assistance program held back the eviction wave for now.</p> <p>Pre-pandemic, Pierce County would see 3,200 to 3,500 evictions in an average year, which equates to around 265 to 295 a month.</p> <p>Following the expiration of the eviction moratorium, there were 108 evictions in December, 140 evictions in January, 115 evictions in February and 160 evictions in March.</p> <p>“I think in Pierce County, I think throughout Washington state... [rental assistance] has been a hugely successful program at keeping people out of the eviction process and out of the court,” said Morzol.</p> <p>Of the evictions referred for resolution, about 90% of them were for nonpayment, according to county data. Approximately 15,000 households have been served through the rental assistance program so far, with an average of \$10,500 given to each household. In total, the county has spent \$107 million in funds.</p> <p>“If you were to take [rental assistance] out of the equation, we would have had the tidal wave. We would have had the tsunami,” said Morzol. “That’s a significant amount of nonpayment cases that did not come through.”</p>

Pierce County's historically high eviction rate

Pierce County is still seeing the highest number of evictions in Washington state, which is in line with a historically high eviction rate in the region.

King County has had fewer evictions in the months following the expiration of the statewide moratorium, despite being the biggest county in the state. There were 69 evictions in December of 2021, 108 evictions in January of this year, 103 evictions in February and 124 evictions in March, according to data from the [King County Bar Association](#).

Morzol cited extra protections cities have enacted within King County that kept the overall number of evictions lower than in Pierce County. Seattle's eviction moratorium [expired on February 28](#), and tenants have added protections in the city that can help them in eviction proceedings. Other cities, like Burien and Kenmore, also enacted eviction moratoriums of their own that may have helped to keep the overall number of evictions low.

Even before the pandemic, renters had a higher risk of eviction in Pierce County than anywhere else in Washington by 56%.

Compounding economic pressures already facing renters, Pierce County also saw the biggest jump in unemployment between 2019 and 2020 in Washington state, even ranking No. 38 in the nation for rising unemployment rates in that time, according to data from [UC Berkley's Urban Displacement Project](#).

The economic pressures are even more pressing on BIPOC households, who, on average, are making less than the median income, according to the project's findings.

Of Pierce County rental assistance applications, a disproportionate number were submitted by Black renters, who made up over a quarter of applications but represent just 7% of Pierce County's population. Around 9% of applications were submitted by people who identify as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, although estimates suggest that group makes up just over 1% of Pierce County's total population.

The future of rental assistance

In Pierce County, rental assistance applications are still steadily flowing into the Community Services Department, according to Community Services Manager John Barbee. To date, the county has spent about 77% of its funding and is still accepting applications.

"We estimate that we're going to serve about 4,200 more households with the dollars that we currently have," said Barbee.

"I think we still recognize that, yes, we've spent almost \$110 million, and we still know there's a need, so we're still doing the best we can to exhaust all funds and avenues to continue to serve the residents of Pierce County," he said.

Although federal COVID-19 money isn't expected to be replenished after the current round of funding is exhausted, rental assistance in some form is here to stay.

Current funds are expected to last the county through the summer and into the fall. After that, Community Services will transition into operating a smaller but longer-term rental assistance program, which Pierce County aims to have running by Jan. 1, 2023.

Currently, tenants must declare they've been impacted by COVID-19 to qualify for rental assistance. In the future, that will no longer be a requirement.

"One of the things is we definitely know that there is still a great need for assistance and ongoing support for our residents in Pierce County," said Barbee. "So what we're looking at is changing our program guidelines."

	<p>The money comes from HB 1277, which passed through the state Legislature last year. The bill adds an additional \$100 surcharge on all documents recorded by a county auditor. The funds will go toward affordable housing, rental assistance, shelter space and managing the state's homeless programs.</p> <p>"As long as we continue to have that funding source, we will continue to have that program," said Barbee.</p> <p>What will happen between the time rental assistance funds run out and the new program is operational is unknown.</p> <p>"Now the second big question comes to us, and that question is going to be, what happens when rental assistance runs out? It's a finite amount of resources, there's still money available in Pierce County, but we're going to come to a point where that money has been expended," said Morzol. "If those households aren't stabilized at this point, then it's anybody's guess what's going to happen."</p> <p>Eligibility guidelines for future rental assistance have not been established by the Department of Commerce at this time, according to Barbee. However, as soon as they're available the county plans to start work on setting up the new program.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Inflation double-punch families, food banks
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/money/economy/rising-inflation-packs-double-punch-families-food-banks/281-c8c84839-a456-4653-ae1d-7569912c76bd
GIST	<p>SEDRO-WOOLLEY, Wash — Despite the COVID-19 pandemic becoming much more manageable and the nation's unemployment rate coming down significantly, Western Washington is starting to see longer lines at food banks because so many Americans just can't afford to live.</p> <p>Visiting the Helping Hands Food Bank in Sedro-Woolley is simply a weekly way of life for Elizabeth Pole and her family.</p> <p>Elizabeth's husband has a good job as a concrete worker, but it doesn't pay all the bills for their family of 4, including two special-needs children.</p> <p>She stays at home with their two boys because day care is so expensive and hard to find.</p> <p>"Milk prices have gone up around \$3, cheese prices about \$4. Gas is outrageous," Elizabeth says. "It's impossible."</p> <p>Prices are climbing out of reach for both people using food banks and the food banks themselves.</p> <p>According to the Feeding America food bank network, a truck load of peanut butter cost around \$34,000 two years ago at this time.</p> <p>Now it's \$40,000.</p> <p>The same amount of tuna has jumped from \$46,000 to \$57,000.</p> <p>At Everett's Volunteers of America food distribution center, the number of people seeking boxes of free food is up nearly 25%.</p> <p>Rising costs must be absorbed or passed on to the clientele who are in need themselves.</p> <p>This comes at a time when donations are down.</p> <p>"We're concerned about shortages," says VOA's Chris Hatch. "We're concerned about not having enough money to make food purchases."</p>

Hatch says hungry families may have to do more with less.

"If current rates go as they are we could be forced to provide smaller boxes of food," says Hatch. "It could end up affecting what we can give to our families."

Back at Helping Hands, Executive Director Rebecca Skrinde said it's a simple matter of economics.

"We've surveyed our clientele," she says. "80% of them have jobs but their salaries did not rise 40% to cover groceries and gas."

That means families like Elizabeth's will continue to struggle.

"If not for this food bank we would be screwed. Completely screwed," she says. "It's hard to survive. It is. It's really hard to survive."

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HEADLINE	04/12 Covid cases rising in western Washington
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/covid-cases-rising-western-washington/KMD4DBEEFZCMTK7APSR5VFYAJQ/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Now to the pandemic and the latest numbers from the Seattle-King County Health Department.</p> <p>Right now, the county is seeing an average of 484 new cases each day. That is three times the number of cases reported about a month ago.</p> <p>That is still a much lower number than the peak of omicron, when King County was reporting 6,500 new cases per day.</p> <p>Now Washington is forming a work group of public health officials to help recommend metrics for reinstituting a mask mandate.</p> <p>The state public health official says the rise in cases is concerning, but the state is not alarmed.</p> <p>Business wasn't especially brisk at this COVID-19 testing site along Aurora Avenue, but people are still showing up concerned they might have contracted the coronavirus.</p> <p>"I have a runny nose and I'm getting weak," said Segaye Tewole. "And I'm coughing."</p> <p>Tewole was among those who came here because they have symptoms, even though he says he is vaccinated and boosted.</p> <p>So, he is doing what health officials say anyone should.</p> <p>"I am not feeling well," said Tewole. "So I have to check my status."</p> <p>He is not alone. Dr. Scott Lindquist, the state epidemiologist, says he is concerned by what he sees.</p> <p>"Yeah, so, I think the big concern is we're seeing a modest increase on the west side of the state here," he said, "where we're seeing more patients being diagnosed."</p> <p>Lindquist says soon a work group will be created to determine whether masks and other restrictions should be reimposed.</p>

	<p>“It’s way too early to institute mandatory respiratory guidance right now,” he said. “But our guidance has always been recommending masks.”</p> <p>Still, Dr. John Lynch, a UW Medicine infectious disease specialist, says with more people using rapid COVID-19 tests at home, it may be difficult to get a clear picture of how many people are actually sick.</p> <p>“We don’t know how big the number is of people with COVID in our community,” he said. “What we do know is that people are going to start ending up in the hospital; and that’s the metric we’re paying the closest attention to right now.”</p> <p>Both he and Lindquist suggest reimposing the restrictions on yourself: get vaccinated; get boosted, twice, if eligible; wear a mask indoors, and keep personal distance.</p> <p>They also recommend taking a home test if you have symptoms or are going to be with a lot of people.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Raw oysters: norovirus outbreak Seattle
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/norovirus-outbreak-among-raw-oysters-consumed-around-seattle/7KSI7H5XOZGJZHBKQAEWN4TJDM/
GIST	<p>The Washington Department of Health is advising residents to not serve or eat certain oysters after an outbreak of norovirus across the Seattle area.</p> <p>Since March 7, 62 residents have reported norovirus-like symptoms after eating oysters harvested from the south and central parts of Baynes Sound, British Columbia, Canada.</p> <p>“For every one person who’s been counted, there’s probably another five to 10 people who’ve been infected as well,” said Bill Marler, an attorney who specializes in food poisoning cases.</p> <p>He tells KIRO 7 this current norovirus outbreak is among the worst he has seen in his decades of practice and it could be several weeks before caseloads come down.</p> <p>Given the high case numbers, Marler says local restaurants could be facing future lawsuits.</p> <p>“Even if the product was contaminated when it showed up at your restaurant, you’re on the hook, especially if the product is from outside the United States where a victim wouldn’t have jurisdiction,” said Marler.</p> <p>The DOH suggests people should verify a restaurant or retailer’s oyster source to confirm they were not harvested from the specific British Columbia harvest area.</p> <p>Retailers are also asked to stop selling oysters.</p> <p>More information can be found on the DOH website.</p> <p>The following is a list of locations, date of occurrences and the number of people affected by illnesses associated with the consumption of raw oysters:</p> <p>Elliott’s Oyster House 1201 Alaskan Way Pier 56, Seattle - 3/13/2022 - Number reported ill: 1</p> <p>The Pink Door 1919 Post Alley, Seattle - 3/15/2022 - Number reported ill: 3</p> <p>The Pink Door 1919 Post Alley, Seattle - 3/15/2022 - Number reported ill: 2</p> <p>Enzo’s Bistro & Bar 120 NW Gilman Blvd., Issaquah - 3/15/2022 - Number reported ill: 2</p> <p>Omega Ouzeri 1529 14th Ave., Seattle - 3/16/2022 - Number reported ill: 2</p> <p>Taylor Shellfish 124 Republican St., Seattle - 3/17/2022 - Number reported ill: 3</p> <p>Enzo’s Bistro & Bar 120 NW Gilman Blvd., Issaquah - 3/17/2022 - Number reported ill: 2</p> <p>The Pink Door 1919 Post Alley, Seattle - 3/17/2022 - Number reported ill: 4</p>

	<p>Ray's Boathouse 6049 Seaview Ave. NW, Seattle - 3/18/2022 - Number reported ill: 2</p> <p>Ray's Boathouse 6049 Seaview Ave. NW, Seattle - 3/18/2022 - Number reported ill: 5</p> <p>Ray's Boathouse 6049 Seaview Ave. NW, Seattle - 3/19/2022 - Number reported ill: 3</p> <p>Goldfinch Tavern at Four Seasons Hotel 99 Union St., Seattle - 3/20/2022 - Number reported ill: 2</p> <p>Goldfinch Tavern at Four Seasons Hotel 99 Union St., Seattle - 3/21/2022 - Number reported ill: 3</p> <p>Ray's Boathouse 6049 Seaview Ave. NW, Seattle - 3/23/2022 - Number reported ill: 3</p> <p>Shucker's at Fairmont Olympic Hotel 411 University St., Seattle - 3/25/2022 - Number reported ill: 1</p> <p>Ivar's Acres of Clams 1001 Alaskan Way Ste. 102, Seattle - 3/25/2022 - Number reported ill: 2</p> <p>Omega Ouzeri 1529 14th Ave., Seattle - 3/25/2022 - Number reported ill: 2</p> <p>Ray's Boathouse 6049 Seaview Ave. NW, Seattle - 3/25/2022 - Number reported ill: 2</p> <p>Taylor Shellfish 1521 Melrose Ave., Seattle - 3/26/2022 - Number reported ill: 1</p> <p>Duke's Seafood and Chowder 1111 Fairview Ave. N, Seattle - 3/28/2022 - Number reported ill: 2</p> <p>Chinook's at Salmon Bay 1900 W Nickerson St. #103, Seattle - 3/31/2022 - Number reported ill: 1</p> <p>Sushi Kappo Tamura 2968 Eastlake Ave. E, Seattle - 3/31/2022 - Number reported ill: 1</p> <p>Barking Frog Restaurant 14580 NE 145th St., Woodinville - 4/1/2022 - Number reported ill: 1</p> <p>Barking Frog Restaurant 14580 NE 145th St., Woodinville - 4/1/2022 - Number reported ill: 1</p> <p>All Water Seafood & Oyster Bar 1000 1st Ave., Seattle - 4/1/2022 - Number reported ill: 1</p> <p>Il Terrazzo Carmine 411 1st Ave. S, Seattle - 4/2/2022 - Number reported ill: 4</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Fastest inflation rate since 1981
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/12/business/cpi-inflation-report#inflation-consumer-price-index
GIST	<p>Consumer prices rose 8.5 percent in the year through March, reaching the fastest inflation rate since 1981. Stubbornly rapid price increases have been exacerbated by a recent surge in gas costs tied to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Fuel prices jumped sharply higher last month, with the U.S. average for a gallon of regular gas peaking at \$4.33 on March 11.</p> <p>Gas is not the entire story. Stripping out volatile fuel and food, so-called core prices climbed at a brisk 6.5 percent in the year through March, up from 6.4 percent in the year through February. Even so, the core index offered a rare glimmer of good inflation news: It slowed down a bit on a monthly basis, rising 0.3 percent from February, compared with 0.5 percent the prior month.</p> <p>March's data may represent a high-water mark for inflation, some economists have said. Overall price increases could begin abating in the coming months in part because gasoline prices have come down somewhat — a gallon cost \$4.10 on Tuesday, according to AAA. Researchers have been expecting consumers to stop buying so many goods, like cars and appliances, potentially taking pressure off overburdened supply chains and allowing prices for those products to moderate.</p> <p>Given the pop in gasoline prices in March, "these numbers are likely to represent something of a peak," said Gregory Daco, the chief economist at Ernst & Young's strategy consultancy, EY-Parthenon. Still, he said, it will be critical to watch whether the core numbers slow down on a monthly basis this spring and summer.</p> <p>A spate of recent developments could keep inflation uncomfortably high.</p> <p>Wages are up sharply, pushing costs up for employers and potentially prompting them to lift prices. Businesses may feel that they have the power to pass rising costs along to customers, and even to expand their profits, because consumers have continued to spend during a full year of rapid price increases.</p> <p>Housing costs continued to increase relatively quickly, though there was some deceleration in an index of rent of primary residences. Those costs are likely to be a major factor determining the course of inflation in the months ahead. A coronavirus outbreak is shuttering cities and disrupting production in China, and the war in Ukraine adds a huge dose of uncertainty about commodity prices and supply chains.</p>

	On the other hand, prices are now being measured against relatively high readings last year, which could make it easier for annual inflation readings to slow down. Prices for some products, including used cars and apparel, moderated or even fell in March, which could be a hopeful sign that overall price increases will slow as rapid goods inflation wanes.
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HEADLINE	04/12 Pay raises not keeping up to inflation
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/12/business/cpi-inflation-report#consumer-prices-real-wages
GIST	<p>American workers are experiencing their fastest wage gains in years — but pay raises still aren't keeping up with inflation on average.</p> <p>Average hourly earnings for all workers were up 5.6 percent in March, according to the Labor Department. But prices rose 8.5 percent — which means that, adjusted for inflation, average pay was actually down by 2.7 percent. For rank-and-file workers — what the government calls “production and nonsupervisory employees” — hourly pay was down 2.4 percent after adjusting for inflation. Other, more sophisticated measures of wage growth likewise show price increases outpacing pay raises.</p> <p>Not all workers are losing ground. Waiters, hotel maids and other nonmanagement employees in leisure and hospitality have seen their pay rise by nearly 15 percent over the past year, well ahead of inflation. The same is true in other service industries where employers have been increasing wages to try to attract workers. And over the pandemic as a whole, workers on average have seen their inflation-adjusted earnings rise — just not as quickly as they were rising before the pandemic.</p> <p>If wage growth keeps lagging behind inflation, that could force some consumers to pull back on spending. Reduced demand for goods and services could, in turn, lead businesses to cut prices — or at least raise them more slowly — causing inflation to moderate.</p> <p>But it may not be that simple. Rapid job growth and strong demand for labor mean that more people are working, and they're working more hours. That means that Americans, in the aggregate, are earning more money, even if their hourly pay isn't keeping up with inflation. That could keep consumer demand strong in the face of inflation.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Boeing downgrades jet orders: geopolitics
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/business/article/Geopolitics-leads-Boeing-to-downgrade-dozens-of-17075200.php
GIST	<p>Boeing has removed 141 airplanes from its backlog of pending orders, many of them because of what it termed geopolitical considerations including restrictions on sales because of sanctions like those imposed on Russia for its war against Ukraine.</p> <p>The big aircraft manufacturer said Tuesday it took 38 net new orders for planes in March, most of them single-aisle 737 Max jets. Air Lease Corp. placed an order for 32 Maxes.</p> <p>Boeing removed 141 previously ordered planes from its backlog of more than 4,000 planes because accounting rules make it unclear whether the sale will be completed. Sometimes planes are removed from the backlog because of an order cancellation, other times because the buyer's financial problems place the deal in jeopardy.</p> <p>This time, however, Boeing said that about two-thirds of the planes removed from the backlog resulted from geopolitical reasons including sanctions. It declined to identify the customers whose orders were, in effect, downgraded to questionable.</p> <p>Boeing previously indicated that it had undelivered orders for 34 planes with Russian carriers Utair and Volga-Dnepr and seven with SkyUp Airlines of Ukraine.</p>

	<p>In the past 10 years, Boeing has taken orders for 86 planes from Russian companies including 30 from Utair, 22 from Sberbank Leasing and six from Aeroflot, the nation's flag carrier.</p> <p>The United States and its allies have been imposing steadily escalating sanctions on Russia since it invaded Ukraine in February. Sberbank is among the targets.</p> <p>Boeing Co. said it delivered 41 planes in March, including 37 737s, most of them Max models. The Chicago-based company has delivered 95 planes so far this year, providing crucial cash because airlines typically pay a large part of the purchase price on delivery.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Teen drug use down; OD deaths skyrocket
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/mental-health/teen-drug-use-is-down-but-overdose-deaths-among-youths-are-skyrocketing-studies-show/
GIST	<p>Within 30 blocks of his home in the Seattle neighborhood Ballard, substance use disorder counselor Johnny Ohta knows at least 25 teens and young adults addicted to little blue pills.</p> <p>Youth might think the drugs, stamped with “M” and “30” to resemble oxycodone pills, look innocent enough. But they’re counterfeit — laced with the synthetic opioid fentanyl, a drug approximately 100 times as powerful as other opioids and one linked to an alarming rise in overdose deaths.</p> <p>At the same time, Ohta has seen a hopeful shift in youths’ approach to other substances like tobacco and marijuana; smoking tobacco is taboo in many younger circles, he said, and the novelty of using marijuana tempered after recreational use became legal in 2012.</p> <p>Two new pieces of research now help confirm the duality Ohta and many others are witnessing locally: Overall, teen drug use has dropped to a relative historic low, according to the state’s latest Healthy Youth Survey and national data. But the drug supply is becoming more dangerous. And teen overdose deaths, which have been flat for the last decade, are now increasing rapidly, suggests a national study published today in The Journal of the American Medical Association, or JAMA.</p> <p>“Both things are happening at once,” said Ohta, who works for youth treatment center Ryther and has worked with youth for more than 25 years. “Something is happening with young people and drug use that is positive, and I think it’s extremely important to highlight. ... And then you have another thing going on that’s severely detrimental and causing death and harm to a lot of young people and families.”</p> <p>Teen overdose deaths nationally remained stable from 2010 to 2019, but suddenly doubled from 2019 to 2020 — and increased by another 20% the following year, according to the new JAMA study.</p> <p>Simultaneously, teenagers’ recent use of any drugs dropped significantly for the first time in a decade from about 18% in 2020 to about 11% in 2021. Although Washington data on youth fentanyl use isn’t available, the new JAMA study helps fill in details about trends over which Ohta and others on the ground have been sounding an alarm.</p> <p>The study includes Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data on overdose deaths among 14- to 18-year-olds. In addition to the overall increase, it found that Native youth, as well as Latino and Hispanic youth, are overdosing at higher rates than their peers.</p> <p>The findings related to Latino and Hispanic teens are somewhat surprising, says Joseph Friedman, lead researcher on the JAMA study and a substance use researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles. Adults in this demographic group tend to have lower overdose death rates relative to other adults.</p>

The finding might be partially explained by the prevalence of fentanyl pills on the West Coast compared to other regions, he said, since Western states have a higher proportion of Latino and Hispanic youth than many other corners of the U.S.

[The West Coast](#) is the “epicenter of this,” Friedman said: The youth overdose death rate here is 1.68 times the national average.

“The game-changer”

Overdose deaths among the general population have been on the rise for the past decade. But until now, youth were largely insulated from any increase. The new jump in overdose deaths among young people is particularly worrisome, and the relative increase among those ages 14-18 is now the highest of any age group, Friedman said. The data fit with [December findings](#) suggesting the rate of fentanyl and other synthetic opioid-related overdose deaths in Washingtonians under 30 has increased dramatically since 2018.

“This is very much a historic, unprecedented shift and (is) very concerning,” Friedman said. “I’m particularly concerned because we’ve seen this with other subgroups of the population, where once overdose rates start to increase exponentially, they tend to keep increasing exponentially for a long time.”

The sudden increase in young people is likely tied to illicit fentanyl pills — called “blues” — that are flooding the drug market, Friedman said. For teenagers, he and other experts said, experimenting with a pill is an easier sell than injecting or smoking a drug on foil — methods that, culturally, seem like a deeper descent into serious drug use.

“All the images we’ve been fed are not the image of taking a pill or taking a hit off a little pill,” Ohta said. “That’s really what’s the game-changer.”

Stark decline

Young people in Washington began reporting less frequent use of drugs like alcohol and tobacco at least a decade ago.

The Healthy Youth Survey — a statewide survey of more than 208,000 Washington students that’s published every two years or so — suggests this downward trend accelerated during the pandemic, including among youth who could be more prone to using drugs, such as those who miss school, are low-income, or are homeless or forced out of housing because of their family’s finances.

The data suggests that between 2018 and 2021, recent use of marijuana and alcohol declined from 18% to 7% and 8%, respectively, and cigarette use declined from 5% to 2%. The data refers to high school sophomores’ drug use, which researchers use as an indicator of teen drug use more generally.

“It is a pretty notable trend,” said Maayan Simckes, principal investigator for the state study and an epidemiologist at the Washington State Department of Health. “Unfortunately, with one year of data during the pandemic, we just don’t know enough yet” about what is driving the drop or whether it will persist.

In general, experts say the long-term decline in teen drug use could be explained by cultural attitude shifts about drugs, and personal experience or education about addiction and the opioid crisis. New state laws, [such as the 2020 move](#) that made it illegal to sell tobacco and vaping products to anyone under 21, could also play a role, Simckes said.

Pandemic-specific factors, like school closures, likely contributed to the even starker decline over the past few years.

“It’s about supply and demand — and access, in many ways, was more difficult,” during the pandemic, said Caleb Banta-Green, a principal research scientist at the University of Washington School of

Medicine's Addictions, Drug & Alcohol Institute. "Youth were in the home. They were supervised" in many households, and were cut off from typical social activities like sports, after-school clubs and parties.

State officials who oversee the survey say they're still analyzing the data to understand what factors influenced drug use during the pandemic. But the results do suggest that over the past decade, youths' perception of the availability of substances has declined.

Dueling trends

The Healthy Youth Survey has limitations: It doesn't ask youth specifically about fentanyl, and it only captures the experiences of youth who are in school.

Of the youth Ohta knows who use fentanyl, "they're not in school," he said. "So they're not taking the Healthy (Youth) Survey."

Ohta has a visible presence in King County. He's known for riding his bike across the county to deliver drug counseling services to youth who sleep outside and other teens in crisis; his commitment to his work was detailed in a [2019 profile in Crosscut](#). These days, he travels with a physician who can prescribe the medications suboxone or buprenorphine, which are used to treat opioid use disorder.

His lens has narrowed to a specific population: those ages 14 to 24 who are addicted to fentanyl. He's witnessing a particularly troubling phenomena among these youth and young adults: They're falling into addiction much more rapidly — within a few weeks' or months' time — than is typical among folks who become addicted to fentanyl.

"It's the severity of addiction and the rapid onset that's happening to a lot more young people that did not happen two years ago," he said.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Putin: invasion until Russia goals met
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/mayor-more-than-10000-civilians-dead-in-ukraine-port-city/
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Vladimir Putin vowed Tuesday that Russia's bloody offensive in Ukraine would continue until its goals are fulfilled and insisted the campaign was going as planned, despite a major withdrawal in the face of stiff Ukrainian opposition and significant losses.</p> <p>Russian troops, thwarted in their push toward Ukraine's capital, are now focusing on the eastern Donbas region, where Ukraine said Tuesday it was investigating a claim that a poisonous substance had been dropped on its troops. It was not clear what the substance might be, but Western officials warned that any use of chemical weapons by Russia would be a serious escalation of the already devastating war.</p> <p>Russia invaded on Feb. 24, with the goal, according to Western officials, of taking Kyiv, toppling the government and installing a Moscow-friendly regime. In the six weeks since, Russia's ground advance stalled, its forces lost potentially thousands of fighters and the military stands accused of killing civilians and other atrocities.</p> <p>Putin insisted Tuesday that his invasion aimed to protect people in parts of eastern Ukraine controlled by Moscow-backed rebels and to "ensure Russia's own security."</p> <p>He said Russia "had no other choice" but to launch what he calls a "special military operation," and vowed it would "continue until its full completion and the fulfillment of the tasks that have been set."</p> <p>For now, Putin's forces are gearing up for a major offensive in the Donbas, which has been torn by fighting between Russian-allied separatists and Ukrainian forces since 2014, and where Russia has recognized the separatists' claims of independence. Military strategists say Russian leaders appear to hope local support, logistics and terrain in the region favor Russia's larger and better-armed military, potentially allowing its troops to finally turn the tide in their favor.</p>

In Mariupol, a strategic port city in the Donbas, a Ukrainian regiment defending a steel mill claimed a drone dropped a poisonous substance on the city. It indicated there were no serious injuries. The assertion by the Azov Regiment, a far-right group now part of the Ukrainian military, could not be independently verified.

It came after a Russia-allied separatist official appeared to urge the use of chemical weapons, telling Russian state TV on Monday that separatist forces should seize the plant by first blocking all the exits. “And then we’ll use chemical troops to smoke them out of there,” the official, Eduard Basurin, said. He denied Tuesday that separatist forces had used chemical weapons in Mariupol.

Ukraine’s Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar said officials were investigating, and it was possible phosphorus munitions — which cause horrendous burns but are not classed as chemical weapons — had been used in Mariupol.

Much of the city has been razed in weeks of pummeling by Russian troops. The mayor said Monday that the siege has left more than 10,000 civilians dead, their corpses “carpeted through the streets.” Mayor Vadym Boychenko said the death toll in Mariupol alone could surpass 20,000 and gave new details of allegations by Ukrainian officials that Russian forces have brought mobile cremation equipment to dispose of the corpses.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, acknowledged the challenges Ukrainian troops face in Mariupol. He said on Twitter that they remain blocked and are having issues with supplies, while Zelenskyy and Ukrainian generals “do everything possible (and impossible) to find a solution and help our guys.”

“For more than 1.5 months our defenders protect the city from (Russian) troops, which are 10+ times larger,” Podolyak said in a tweet. “They’re fighting under the bombs for each meter of the city. They make (Russia) pay an exorbitant price.”

British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said the use of chemical weapons “would be a callous escalation in this conflict,” while Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne said it would be a “wholesale breach of international law.”

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said in a statement that the U.S. could not confirm the drone report. But he noted the administration’s persistent concerns “about Russia’s potential to use a variety of riot control agents, including tear gas mixed with chemical agents, in Ukraine.”

Britain, meanwhile, has warned that Russia may use phosphorus bombs — whose use in civilian areas is banned under international law — in Mariupol.

In the face of stiff resistance by Ukrainian forces bolstered by Western weapons, Russian forces have increasingly relied on bombarding cities, flattening many urban areas and leaving thousands of people dead. The war has also driven more than 10 million Ukrainians from their homes — including nearly two-thirds of all children.

Moscow’s retreat from cities and towns around the capital, Kyiv, led to the discovery of large numbers of apparently massacred civilians, prompting widespread condemnation and accusations that Russia is committing war crimes in Ukraine.

Reports have primarily focused on the northwestern suburbs such as Bucha, but Ukraine’s prosecutor-general’s office said Tuesday that it was also looking into events in the Brovary district, which lies to the northeast.

The prosecutor’s office said the bodies of six civilians had been found with gunshot wounds in a basement in the village of Shevchenkove and that Russian forces were believed to be responsible.

	<p>Prosecutors are also investigating allegations that Russian forces fired on a convoy of civilians trying to leave by car from the village of Peremoha in the Brovary district, killing four people, including a 13-year-old boy. In another attack near Bucha, five people were killed, including two children, when a car was fired upon, prosecutors said.</p> <p>Putin falsely claimed Tuesday that Ukraine's accusation that hundreds of civilians were killed by Russian troops in the town of Bucha were "fake." Associated Press reporters saw dozens of bodies in and around the town, some with hands bound who appeared to have been shot at close range.</p> <p>The Russian leader spoke at the Vostochny space launch facility in the country's Far East, during his first known foray outside Moscow since the war began. He also said that foreign powers wouldn't succeed in isolating Russia.</p> <p>He said that Russia's economy and financial system withstood the blow from what he called the Western sanctions "blitz" and claimed they would backfire by driving up prices for essentials such as fertilizer, leading to food shortages and increase migration flows to the West.</p> <p>Addressing the pace of the campaign, Putin said Russia was proceeding "calmly and rhythmically" because it wanted to "achieve the planned goals while minimizing the losses."</p> <p>While building up forces in the east, Russia continued to strike targets across Ukraine in a bid to wear down the country's defenses. Russia's defense ministry said Tuesday that it used air- and sea-launched missiles to destroy an ammunition depot and airplane hangar at Starokostiantyniv in the western Khmelnytskyi region and an ammunition depot near Kyiv.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Health officials: OD deaths continue rise
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article260359670.html
GIST	<p>New data shows the number of people dying from drug overdoses in Washington state continues to rise, according to state health officials.</p> <p>Drug-related overdose deaths in the state topped 2,000 in 2021, a more than 66% increase compared to 2019, the Washington Department of Health said in a news release Tuesday. More than half of the overdose deaths are because of fentanyl, and fentanyl overdose deaths have increased about 10-fold since 2016, officials said.</p> <p>"Overdose deaths are a public health emergency, and fentanyl is a major driver," Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, MD, MPH, Chief Science Officer, said. "What looks like a prescription oxycodone pill could be a counterfeit with more than enough fentanyl to kill. People who use drugs should assume that any drugs bought on the street, online, or from a friend has fentanyl."</p> <p>The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last year reported that for the first time, more than 100,000 Americans had died of drug overdoses over a 12-month period. About two-thirds of the deaths were linked to fentanyl and other synthetic drugs, which can be 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine, heroin or prescription opioids.</p> <p>People should consider carrying at least two doses of naloxone to help prevent deaths from opioid overdose, Kwan-Gett. Everyone in Washington can have a naloxone prescription filled at a pharmacy by using a standing order, officials said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 WSF faces unprecedented staff shortages
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article260337165.html

GIST	<p>Officials with Washington State Ferries acknowledge the system is short on staff and in need of dozens of new recruits.</p> <p>A March report from the ferry system says staff shortages are unprecedented in the system's 70-year history, KING-TV reported.</p> <p>"It's not good, quite honestly. We don't have enough people to sail the vessels right now," Washington State Ferry spokesman Ian Sterling said Monday. "We need to hire, train, and get people out on the water."</p> <p>Delays and cancellations have been typical during the pandemic. Sterling said a staffing shortage had been expected even before the pandemic began.</p> <p>The Washington State Ferry system is competing with for-profit companies, particularly for engine room crews, but the system has hired "well over a hundred people in the last six months," he said.</p> <p>In 2021, Washington State Ferries operated about 22,000 fewer sailings than 2019. Vessel availability has recovered but remains at risk because of the aging fleet, according to the report. The ferry system had 24 vessels five years ago but now has 21.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Tacoma 4th July: no air show; still fireworks
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article260346910.html
GIST	<p>There isn't enough time or support to get the Freedom Fair Air Show off the ground for the Fourth of July this year, its organizers said Friday.</p> <p>The Tacoma Events Commission cited recently lifted state-mandated COVID-19 restrictions and lack of support from the city and Metro Parks Tacoma as factors in its decision.</p> <p>TEC, a nonprofit, has operated independently since it parted ways with the city after the last Freedom Fair in 2019. Since then, Metro Parks Tacoma has taken over producing the city's Independence Day celebration.</p> <p>The city and Metro Parks both maintain they have not stood in the way of an air show. TEC held an air show in 2021.</p> <p>NO AIR SHOW</p> <p>The restrictions on large gatherings made it difficult to plan for the air show, said TEC president and CEO Tony La Stella.</p> <p>The air show, which has traditionally featured civilian aerobatics and military planes, costs up to \$70,000, he said.</p> <p>The military planes need to be arranged a year in advance. Those, in turn, pull in major sponsors.</p> <p>"Without those jets, there is limited interest by sponsors and VIPs to support the event," La Stella said.</p> <p>Until last week, TEC still hoped to lineup major sponsors. Those hopes collapsed last week.</p> <p>Now, it will turn to planning for a return of the air show in 2023.</p> <p>"We are actively working on bringing the event back on July 4th, 2023, and annually thereafter," La Stella said.</p> <p>SUMMER BLAST</p>

	<p>Metro Parks Tacoma's Summer Blast is still a go for Fourth of July, the agency's events coordinator, Sophia McKee, said Tuesday.</p> <p>The new event will spread out over Dune Peninsula at Point Defiance Park and at Cummings Park on the Ruston Way waterfront. The walking distance between the parks is 1-1/2 miles.</p> <p>Following a day of entertainment, food and vendors, Summer Blast will feature a city-provided \$80,000 fireworks display.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Providence to pay \$22M medical fraud case
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/providence-to-pay-22m-in-medical-fraud-case-largest-such-settlement-in-eastern-wa/
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Providence Health & Services Washington has agreed to pay \$22.6 million to resolve allegations that its Walla Walla hospital fraudulently billed Medicare, Medicaid and other federal health care programs for medically unnecessary neurosurgery procedures, prosecutors said Tuesday.</p> <p>Vanessa R. Waldref, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, and Bob Ferguson, the Washington state Attorney General, announced the settlement between Providence, the U.S. and the state of Washington, which administers Washington's Medicaid program using a combination of state and federal funding.</p> <p>It is the largest-ever health care fraud settlement in the Eastern District of Washington, Waldref's office said in a statement.</p> <p>Providence operates 51 hospitals in seven western U.S. states, including Providence St. Mary's Medical Center in Walla Walla, Washington.</p> <p>The hospital did not immediately return phone calls seeking comment.</p> <p>Between 2013 and 2018, Providence St. Mary's employed neurosurgeons identified in the settlement agreement as Dr. A and Dr. B, Waldref's office said in a statement.</p> <p>Providence St. Mary's paid neurosurgeons on a system that provided them a financial incentive to perform more surgical procedures of greater complexity. Between 2014 and 2018, Providence paid Dr. A between \$2.5 million and \$2.9 million per year, the statement said.</p> <p>Tuesday's settlement resolves allegations that Providence falsely billed Medicare, Washington State Medicaid and other federal health care programs for deficient and medically unnecessary neurosurgery procedures performed by Dr. A and Dr. B.</p> <p>"Patients with back pain and spinal injury deserve top-notch care from a provider who puts the patient first and is not improperly influenced by how much he can bill for the procedure," Waldref said.</p> <p>"Providence's failure to ensure that Dr. A and Dr. B were performing safe and medically-appropriate surgery procedures, despite repeated warnings, put patients' lives and safety at serious risk," Waldref said.</p> <p>"Patients trust their doctors that the care they receive is necessary, particularly when they are undergoing neurosurgery," Ferguson said. "Performing unnecessary surgeries for profit is a betrayal of that trust."</p> <p>As part of the settlement agreement, Providence admitted that hospital employees expressed concerns that Dr. A and Dr. B were endangering the safety of patients, had performed surgery on candidates who were not appropriate for surgery and failed to properly document their procedures and outcomes.</p>

	<p>Providence admitted that, while it eventually placed both Dr. B and Dr. A on administrative leave in February 2017 and May 2018, respectively, it allowed both doctors to resign while on leave, and it did not take any action to report Dr. A or Dr. B to the appropriate authorities.</p> <p>As part of the settlement, Providence agreed to implement and maintain a number of quality-of-care and patient safety obligations. Additionally, Providence must retain outside experts to perform annual claims and clinical quality systems reviews.</p> <p>The case began in January 2020, when the former medical director of neurosurgery at Providence-St Mary Medical Center filed a complaint with the federal court.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 SPD use-of-force report missing racial data
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/report-use-of-force-by-seattle-police-at-all-time-low-but-racial-disparities-cloud-numbers/
GIST	<p>Use of force by Seattle police officers reached an all-time low last year — after skyrocketing in 2020 during the summer protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd — but statistics continue to show sharp and disturbing evidence of racial inequities when officers resort to their hands, Tasers or guns.</p> <p>A preliminary review of the department’s use-of-force trends since 2019, released this week by the federal monitor overseeing court-ordered police reforms, remarks on significant and ongoing progress made by SPD in lowering the number of use-of-force incidents of all types, and praised the city’s review of the violence in 2020 that marred and undermined those efforts.</p> <p>At the same time, the monitor points out that Black and Native American people continue to be disproportionately represented when force is used, based on census data, and that Asian and Black people make up an inordinate number of the victims of police shootings.</p> <p>However, Seattle police monitor Antonio Oftelie said any conclusions are complicated by the fact that race data was missing in almost a third of the reports overall, even though officers are required to provide it. Both the monitor and Seattle police officials said the failure by officers to report the data, as well as their supervisors to require it, was troubling.</p> <p>Oftelie, calling the missing data a “significant concern,” said Tuesday in an interview that it is unlikely he’ll recommend to U.S. District Judge James Robart that the city be allowed to end its now decade-old consent decree with the Department of Justice without that issue being resolved. The consent decree followed an FBI investigation that found fault with the department’s use of force and found evidence of biased policing.</p> <p>“This significant percentage of use of force with an unknown race overall, and especially for higher levels of force, is concerning,” Oftelie wrote in the report.</p> <p>Brian Maxey, the SPD’s chief operating office, agreed. While he said its fair to expect some reporting anomalies, “but not a third. That is very concerning.” He said the department is in the process of implementing a new reporting system that “should clear that up.”</p> <p>Racial disparity</p> <p>Looking at data from 2019 through 2021 (and excluding the anomalous 2020 data), the monitor found that Black people, who make up 7.3% of the city’s population, were involved in 36% of all uses of force by Seattle police officers, including 54% of police shootings and 36% of other “Type III” incidents where force could result in serious injury or death.</p> <p>Police used “Type II” intermediate force — such as Tasers or pepper spray — against Black people in 34% of those incidents. “Type I” force, involving transitory pain but no physical injury or pointing a firearm, was used against Black people in 37% of those applications.</p>

“The disparity remains pretty glaring,” said Oftelie.

With the 2020 data included, the numbers are only slightly lower and still show significant racial disparities.

Moreover, the data shows that while force incidents are trending downward, Black people are still most likely to have a gun pointed at them by a police officer — a Type I use of force. The instances are down from a high of 304 in 2015 to an average 82 in 2019-2021, a 73% decrease over that period, the report found.

“Even as this decrease is notable, Black subjects are still most likely to be the subject of a firearm-pointing despite being the subject of force less frequently than White subjects, or subjects of an unknown race,” the report said.

The use-of-force report follows one issued last year detailing detentions that showed Seattle police stop Black and Native American people for questioning [at rates far higher than white people](#).

The new report shows that Black people made up 36.4% of all arrests by Seattle police 2020-21. The arrest data for 2019 was incomplete and not included.

Whites made up 67% of the city’s population and 54% of the total use-of-force incidents from 2019-21. Whites also were 54% of arrests for the two-year period of 2020 and 2021. Type III force, not including firearms, was used on white people in 64% of those totals, and whites were subjected to Type II force in 58% of those incidents. White people were targeted in 15% of total police shootings.

Asians, who make up 15.4% of Seattle’s population, were involved in 23% of police shootings. Otherwise, they were underrepresented in the use-of-force data, making up less than 5% of the Type I and Type II force incidents, and none of the Type III incidents that didn’t involve firearms.

Mayor Bruce Harrell, in a statement, said that “racial disparities in policing are totally unacceptable.” Spokesperson Jamie Housen said the mayor’s office “is continuing to evaluate this preliminary report” and will use the data to “provide an important baseline for our efforts to ensure unbiased policing going forward.”

The missing racial data “raises substantial concerns about SPD’s force demographic data collection,” Oftelie wrote. “To say nothing about the potentially troubling implication for continued compliance on the decree’s core self-reporting obligations and the quality of supervisory review of use of force reports.”

Oftelie noted that the race data is missing even though “a good portion of use-of-force incidents are captured via SPD’s body-worn camera system,” which in many of these cases could be used to identify the race of the subject.

Aside from 2020, Oftelie said the overall numbers are encouraging, but added that the racial disparities revealed by the data are disturbing and “the most challenging aspect of how we measure compliance with the consent decree.”

The city agreed to oversight by a federal monitor and to reform the Seattle Police Department in 2012 after an FBI-led investigation completed the year before found officers [“engaged in a pattern and practice” of using excessive force in arrests](#) and uncovered evidence of biased policing.

Since then the city has spent more than \$90 million to revamp the department’s policies and training, bolster its oversight and disciplinary processes and rein in its use of force across the board. The result has been a measurable decrease in the overall instances where force is used by officers across the spectrum of the types of force used, from simple pain-compliance holds to shootings, according to the report.

“SPD’s overall use of force declined 33 percent from 2015 to 2019 and 49 percent from 2015 to 2021,” according to the report. Both 2019 and 2021 showed record low uses of force overall, taking into account reduced police activity due to the pandemic, Oftelie’s team found.

Indeed, the report found that the most serious incidents — ones in which the force used could be expected to cause serious injury or death — were down 60 percent between 2014 and 2021, where officers used serious force an average once in roughly every 40,000 times officers were dispatched to a call.

Incidents where officers point their firearms at people — considered a low-level of force — have declined to the lowest levels ever seen in 2019 and 2021 and incidents where officers resort to using a Taser — considered a medium-level use of force — are down 61 percent, from an average 14 times a month between 2001-2010 to 5.5 times a month from 2014-2021.

However, the report notes that the response to the 2020 protests were a blight on that trend, with record amounts of force reported and [crowd tactics that undermined public trust](#) and resulted in a “near collapse of reporting and review obligations” required by the consent decree. The response to the protests, Oftelie wrote, “produced immediate outrage, lasting harm and a number of important questions about the future of policing in Seattle.”

That summer led to more than 19,000 complaints to the police department’s Office of Police Accountability and resulted in the SPD’s Office of Inspector General initiating [a Sentinel Event Review](#) that is ongoing, which the monitor said is a “robust, necessary process of critically analyzing” the SPD’s protest response. As a result the department has revamped its crowd control policies, with additional changes in the works.

During the protests, Black Lives Matter obtained an injunction preventing SPD from using force against peaceful protesters, and then the department was [held in contempt by a federal judge](#) for violating it.

While an overall reduction in the use of force may meet the legal requirements of the document, “there is also the spirit of the consent decree” and the need to address racial bias.

“Even though trends are in the right direction, the disparity we see is still pretty glaring” and calls for additional and more robust data collection, the report said.

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HEADLINE	04/13 Ukraine: ‘risky maneuver’ Mariupol
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/europe/live-news/ukraine-russia-putin-news-04-13-22/h_c15c49b07b5a5ff5d7878ad8ea045eaa
GIST	<p>Ukrainian presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych has said that after a "risky maneuver" the last remaining defenders of the besieged port city of Mariupol have been able to join forces.</p> <p>Arestovych said Wednesday that "in Mariupol, as a result of a risky maneuver, units of the 36th Independent Marine Brigade broke through to [join] the Azov regiment."</p> <p>Both units have been involved in a last-ditch attempt to resist a Russian offensive against the city that has lasted well over a month.</p> <p>"This is what happens when officers do not lose their heads, but firmly maintain command and control of the troops," Arestovych said.</p> <p>CNN cannot independently confirm the details of the operation. Members of the Marine unit posted a video statement on Tuesday saying they would hold on "until the end," despite being surrounded by Russian forces and running low on supplies.</p>

	<p>On his Facebook account, Arestovych said that the Azov regiment had "received substantial reinforcements ... the 36th brigade avoided defeat and received additional serious opportunities, in fact, gained a second chance."</p> <p>Arestovych claimed that "the defenders of the city, now together, seriously strengthened their defense area."</p> <p>The defenders of the city, where some 100,000 civilians remain trapped amid widespread devastation, have been fighting to hold parts of the port and Azovstal, a giant steel factory that lies on Mariupol's eastern outskirts.</p> <p>The Russian military claimed in a statement Wednesday that 1,026 Ukrainian Marines -- including 162 officers and 47 women servicemembers -- had surrendered in the vicinity of the Ilyich Iron and Steel Works in Mariupol, a claim that could not be verified.</p> <p>Russia has focused an intense propaganda effort around the battle for Mariupol, claiming to have seized key positions in the city, even as Ukrainian forces have continued to hold out.</p> <p>Some background: Independent analysis of the situation in Mariupol on Sunday published by the Institute for the Study of War assessed that the defense of Mariupol had reached a critical stage.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said "tens of thousands" have died in Mariupol, a figure that cannot be independently verified.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Experts: undercounting Covid resurgence
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/us-dramatically-undercounting-current-covid-19-resurgence-experts/story?id=84012793
GIST	<p>Although officials have been warning for weeks of an impending coronavirus resurgence across the country, health experts say it is impossible to know exactly how widespread the nation's latest resurgence may actually be, given the declining availability of COVID-19 data.</p> <p>"An effective public health response depends on high quality, real time data," said Dr. John Brownstein, an epidemiologist at Boston Children's Hospital and an ABC News contributor. "Underreporting, driven by changes in testing behavior, lack of public interest and severely underfunded local public health departments, create a perfect storm of misleading case counts and hospitalizations."</p> <p>Since last summer, dozens of states, along with federal agencies, have opted to scale back on regular COVID-19 data reporting. A dwindling number of states still offer daily COVID-19 data reports, with most now moving to an alternate-day schedule or even to a weekly schedule.</p> <p>"With changing case definitions for hospitalizations, decreased testing, and increased use of at-home rapid tests, data on COVID-19 in the U.S. has become increasingly hard to interpret," Sam Scarpino, the vice president of pathogen surveillance at the Rockefeller Foundation's Pandemic Prevention Institute, told ABC News.</p> <p>The significant decrease in data reporting and the nationwide decline in public testing have left health experts concerned that officials could be missing viral surges and in the dark about true positivity rates in the country, given the lack of information.</p> <p>"I think that we're dramatically undercounting cases. We're probably only picking up one in seven or one in eight infections. So when we say there's 30,000 infections a day, it's probably closer to a quarter of a million infections a day," FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said during an appearance on CBS' "Face the Nation" on Sunday. "They're concentrated in the Northeast right now. And that's because a lot of people are testing at home, they're not presenting for definitive PCR tests, so they're not getting counted."</p>

Health experts say official counts, which show small upticks, may actually be significantly higher than counted, as millions of Americans, who are taking at-home tests, rarely report their results to local health agencies

In consequence, testing levels are now at their lowest point since June 2020, with official test numbers dropping by more than 80% since the beginning of the year, with just half a million tests reported daily, compared to 2.5 million tests reported at the nation's viral peak in January.

Dozens of states have also moved to shutter public testing sites, as at-home COVID-19 tests have become more accessible.

"These are uncharted waters for us with this virus," Dr. Anthony Fauci told Bloomberg in an interview last week, reiterating that it is impossible to predict how COVID-19 will play out in the months to come.

"We are probably underestimating the number of infections that we're having right now, because many of the infections are either without symptoms or minimally symptomatic, and you'll miss that if people do it at home and it's not reported to a central bank," Fauci said.

In an effort to monitor the state of the current resurgence, scientists have been closely monitoring other metrics, including wastewater.

In the last 15 days, nearly 60% of wastewater sites monitored by the CDC have reported an increase in the presence of COVID-19 in their samples.

Hospitalization data, once the gold standard, now becoming less straightforward

For many officials, monitoring virus-related COVID-19 hospitalizations has been key to assessing the state of the pandemic. However, in recent months, hospitalization data, too, has become less accessible.

Earlier this year, the Department of Health and Human Services ended the requirement for hospitals to report several key COVID-19 metrics, including a daily total of the number of COVID-19 deaths, the number of emergency department overflow and ventilated patients, and information on critical staffing shortages.

"Hospitalization data is now considered a key defining metric for pandemic severity by CDC. At the same time, with massive gaps in data from hospitals and states, it's hard to peg these data as a gold standard by which policy decisions can be made," Brownstein explained.

Further, certain states, such as Arizona, have stopped outright reporting of statistics including hospital bed usage and availability, COVID-19 specific hospital metrics and ventilator use.

And last week, one state -- New Hampshire -- quietly shifted the way it counts COVID-19 related hospitalizations to only include certain severely ill patients in its tally.

Despite an uptick in COVID-19 infections across the Northeast, officials from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services are now counting COVID-19 hospitalizations by the number of individuals who are currently receiving treatment for the virus with remdesivir, dexamethasone or both therapies -- a move that has left some health experts puzzled, as they say the shift may conceal the real impact of COVID-19 on the health system.

According to the state's Department of Health and Human Services, the new metric is modeled on National Institutes of Health treatment guidelines and "provides a more accurate view of the how many people are hospitalized because of severe COVID-19 illness, as opposed to patients admitted for other health care needs who may incidentally have COVID-19."

According to the current count, there are 10 patients receiving treatment for COVID-19 in New Hampshire. Comparatively, according to the New Hampshire Hospital Association, there are 83 COVID-19 positive patients receiving care across the state.

"One of the most important metrics has been the total number of people hospitalized with confirmed COVID-19, used by state leadership, hospitals and public health to monitor severity of illness and the prevalence of COVID-19 in New Hampshire," Steve Ahnen, the president of the New Hampshire Hospital Association, told ABC News.

At this time, nationally, there is still no clear number of how many patients are admitted to the hospital for COVID-19 and how many people have coincidentally tested positive for the virus after they were admitted for other reasons.

Experts say these totals likely vary widely, community by community, and a COVID-19 diagnosis, regardless of the reason behind initial admission, can cause additional strain on a health system.

"Unfortunately, the pandemic has continually exposed the fragile infrastructure of which these data are collected. And now at this late stage in the pandemic, data collecting efforts are starting to fracture even further," Brownstein added.

‘The pandemic phase of COVID-19 is not yet over’

In the wake of the Gridiron dinner in Washington, D.C., where more than 80 top officials, politicians and journalists -- all fully vaccinated -- tested positive, health officials from the White House began to shift their messaging surrounding risk levels.

"What's going to happen is that we're going to see that each individual is going to have to make their calculation of the amount of risk that they want to take," Fauci said on ABC's "This Week" on Sunday.

Such messaging has raised questions from some health experts who suggest that the U.S. may be leaving some vulnerable Americans behind.

"We're at a time when U.S. public health authorities are basically declaring 'People, you're on your own' when it comes to determining how to co-exist with COVID-19. Sadly, the tools we've relied on to determine risk levels are being discounted at best and discontinued at worst," Dr. Maureen Miller, professor of epidemiology at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, told ABC News. "It seems we're trying to have it both ways: People are responsible for their own decisions about risk taking as the pandemic continues but are denied the tools to make informed decisions."

Early, proactive measures to slow transmission, such as indoor masking, will prevent more extreme measures later, Scarpino said, adding, "Saving lives and livelihoods is what good public health is all about."

Even if this current surge, due to the omicron subvariant BA.2, is not as explosive as the previous strains, it will still likely take hold in vulnerable parts of the country, Miller said.

"COVID-19 has thrown so many curve balls. It has also provided so many predictable events. Every surge in Europe has preceded a surge in the U.S. Why should this time be different?" Miller explained. "The pandemic phase of COVID-19 is not yet over. We should treat it with the respect that it deserves."

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HEADLINE	04/13 Western pressure mounts on Solomon Is.
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/australian-minister-end-solomons-china-pact-84051889

CANBERRA, Australia: -- Australia and the United States are stepping up diplomatic outreach to the Solomon Islands after China signed a security deal with the South Pacific island nation that could lead to Beijing establishing a military presence there.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Wednesday that his minister for International Development and the Pacific, Zed Seselja, had flown to the Solomon Islands the day before for talks with Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare on the April 1 security pact the country agreed to with China.

Seselja said he had asked Sogavare to abandon the Chinese agreement.

"We have asked Solomon Islands respectfully to consider not signing the agreement and to consult the Pacific family in the spirit of regional openness and transparency, consistent with our region's security frameworks," Seselja said in a statement.

The trip came the same day that U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman spoke with Solomon Islands Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele about Washington's plan to reopen an embassy in the capital, Honiara.

The announcement of reopening the embassy, which has been closed since 1993, came in February before the security pact came to light, but amid already growing concerns about Chinese influence in the strategically important country.

A Chinese military presence in the Solomon Islands would put it not only on the doorstep of Australia and New Zealand but also in close proximity to Guam, with its massive U.S. military bases.

At the time he announced the embassy's reopening, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the U.S. was seeking to increase its influence in the Solomon Islands before China becomes "strongly embedded."

State Department spokesman Ned Price said the call between Sherman and Manele touched on "our joint efforts to broaden and deepen engagement between our countries," in addition to the embassy plans, but gave no further details.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian defended Beijing's cooperation with the Solomons as being based on "the principle of mutual respect and mutual benefit" and in line with international law and international practice.

"It is conducive to the social stability and lasting peace and safety of Solomon Islands and will help promote peace, stability and development of Solomon Islands and the rest of South Pacific region," Zhao told reporters Wednesday at a daily briefing.

"The security cooperation between China and the Solomon Islands does not target any third party or work in opposition to the Solomon Islands' cooperation with other countries, but will complement the exiting regional cooperation mechanism in a positive way," he said.

He added that other countries "should view this in an objective and reasonable manner, respect the sovereignty and independent decision of China and the Solomon Islands, avoid provoking confrontation and creating division in the region, and do something conducive to regional stability and development."

According to a draft of the agreement, which was leaked online, Chinese warships could stop in the Solomons for "logistical replenishment" and China could send police, military personnel and other armed forces to the Solomons "to assist in maintaining social order."

The draft agreement specifies China must approve what information is disclosed about joint security arrangements, including at media briefings.

The Solomon Islands government have said a draft was initialed two weeks ago and that it would be “cleaned up” and finalized soon.

The Solomon Islands government has said it won’t allow China to build a military base there and China has denied seeking a military foothold in the South Pacific, but the pact set off alarm bells among many Western nations.

Since it was signed, two top Australian intelligence officials — Australian Secret Intelligence Service boss Paul Symon and Office of National Intelligence Director-General Andrew Shearer — have met Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare.

Australia already has a bilateral security pact with the Solomon Islands and Australian police peacekeepers have been in the capital, Honiara, since riots in November.

Morrison said Australia was respectfully and directly communicating with the Solomon Islands on the Chinese security deal.

“The suggestion that somehow, some seem to be making, that the Solomon Islands is somehow under the control of Australia I think is offensive to the Solomon Islands,” Morrison said.

“They are a sovereign nation. I respect their independence and they will make their own decisions about their own sovereignty,” he said.

“What we have been doing is ensuring that they are fully aware of the risks and the security matters that are not only of concern to Australia but islands, Pacific nations across the Pacific,” he added.

Seselja said Australia also welcomed statements from Sogavare that it remains the Solomon Islands' “security partner of choice, and his commitment that Solomon Islands will never be used for military bases or other military institutions of foreign powers.”

Morrison announced on Sunday that an election will be held in Australia on May 21. He now leads a caretaker government and must consult the opposition on any policy decisions.

Opposition spokeswoman on foreign affairs Penny Wong said the Australian government had failed on the Solomon Islands.

“This is happening on Mr. Morrison’s watch – the warnings have been there for months, the draft agreement public for weeks – but he has failed to front up and explain how Australia is responding,” Wong said in a statement.

“We need to work with the Pacific family and allies to build a region where sovereignty is respected – and where Australia is the partner of choice,” she added.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Iran supreme leader optimistic nuclear deal
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-supreme-leader-optimistic-nuclear-talks-stalled-84037066
GIST	<p>TEHRAN, Iran -- Iran's supreme leader on Tuesday insisted negotiations over Tehran's tattered nuclear deal “are going ahead properly,” even after repeated comments by American officials that an agreement to restore the accord may not happen.</p> <p>The comments by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, during a meeting with hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi's administration marking the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, offered his endorsement of their “faithful and diligent” efforts.</p>

But restoring the deal remains in question, apparently over Iran's demand that its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard be delisted by America as a terrorist group.

Khamenei made a point to praise the country's foreign minister and negotiating team, something that he had grown sour on under the government of previous President Hassan Rouhani, who attended the event Tuesday night in Tehran as well.

“There is nothing wrong with criticizing and commenting on their performance, as long as it is free from suspicion and pessimism and, as I have said many times, does not weaken the elements of the field and disappoint the people,” Khamenei said, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

Khamenei and other officials have referred to the Guard and its expeditionary Quds Force as “the field” in the past.

He added that the West had faced a “deadlock” since then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear deal in 2018.

“So far our negotiation team has resisted before the other party’s excessive demands and, God willing, (that resistance) will continue,” Khamenei said.

However, lead U.S. negotiator Rob Malley has said in recent days that a deal is “not just around the corner and is not inevitable.” That's been repeated by other American officials since the talks in Vienna went on a “pause” a month ago.

There's been no immediate sign of them resuming, despite Iranian media in recent days suggesting a prisoner swap could see billions of dollars in Iranian assets unfrozen in South Korea.

The U.S. State Department on Tuesday said no deals had been reached on either a prisoner swap or on the nuclear accord.

“Any reports otherwise, including reports that Iranian funds held in restricted accounts in third countries will be transferred, are false,” the State Department said. “Our partners have not released these restricted funds to Iran, nor has the United States authorized or approved any such transfer of restricted funds to Iran.”

The 2015 nuclear deal saw Iran put advanced centrifuges into storage under the watch of the International Atomic Energy Agency, while keeping its enrichment at 3.67% purity and its stockpile at only 300 kilograms (661 pounds) of uranium.

As of Feb. 19, the IAEA says Iran’s stockpile of all enriched uranium was nearly 3,200 kilograms (7,055 pounds). Some has been enriched up to 60% purity — a short technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90%. Meanwhile, Iran has stopped the IAEA from accessing its surveillance camera footage.

That has worried nuclear nonproliferation experts. While Iran insists its program is peaceful, the IAEA and Western governments say Iran had an organized military nuclear program up until the end of 2003.

But having Iran able to sell its crude oil and natural gas on the global market could also push down energy prices. Americans have been paying some of the highest-ever prices at the pump for gasoline, fueled by Russia’s war on Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Khamenei also praised Palestinians for attacks against Israelis that killed and wounded several people in recent days.

"These moves showed that Palestine is alive despite efforts by the U.S. and its followers and through the current moves the final victory will be with the Palestinian people," he said.

	<p>Iran does not recognize Israel and supports anti-Israeli militant groups like the Palestinian group Hamas and Lebanon's Shiite militia group Hezbollah.</p> <p>In Yemen, where Iran supports the Houthi rebels against Iran's regional rival Saudi Arabia, Khamenei urged the kingdom to bring an end to the war. A temporary truce is ongoing there amid Ramadan.</p> <p>"Why do you continue a war when you do not have the possibility of victory in it?" Khamenei asked. "Find a way and pull yourself out of the trouble."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Japan, US hold navy drills off Koreas
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/japan-us-hold-navy-drills-off-koreas-amid-84052263
GIST	<p>TOKYO -- U.S. and Japanese warships, led by the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group, are conducting their joint naval exercise in waters between Japan and the Korean Peninsula for the first time in five years, in a show of their close military alliance amid growing speculation of North Korea's missile or nuclear testing later this week.</p> <p>The U.S. 7th Fleet and Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force said Wednesday they conducted a joint naval exercise at the Sea of Japan on Tuesday and Wednesday. It was the first time the U.S. aircraft carrier held the exercise in the area since 2017 and is seen as an apparent attempt to deter North Korea's provocation.</p> <p>Defense experts have warned that North Korea may launch another missile or even conduct a nuclear test as early as this week when Pyongyang marks the birth anniversary of its founding leader Kim Il Sung. Tension is rising in the region ahead of an annual joint military exercise between the United States and South Korea.</p> <p>Japan has also stepped up joint military exercises with its closest ally, the United States, as well as regional partners in recent years amid rising concern over China's increasingly assertive military actions in the regional seas.</p> <p>Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters that the ongoing joint exercise is "aimed at strengthening military cooperation between Japan and the United States, and is not keeping in mind a specific country. ... We will continue to strengthen deterrence and response capability of the Japan-U.S. alliance and to do utmost for the defense of our country."</p> <p>Details of the exercise will be released by the Japanese Defense Ministry "when the situation allows a disclosure."</p> <p>Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force said its destroyer JS Kongo and JS Inazuma, as well as Japanese F-2 fighters joined USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group "in order to strengthen the capability of Japan-US alliance for effective deterrence and response."</p> <p>"Our works contribute to the regional peace and stability," the Japanese navy tweeted.</p> <p>A Japanese Maritime Self-Defense official said they cannot provide specific dates and locations of the ongoing joint exercise until it's finished.</p> <p>Tension has risen in the area over North Korea's spate of missile tests this year, including its first intercontinental ballistic missile launch in more than four years.</p> <p>Some experts say the North's recent missile tests were meant to perfect its weapons technology, boost its leverage in future negotiations with the U.S. and secure stronger internal loyalty. They say North Korea could soon conduct another ICBM launch, a launch of a satellite-carrying rocket or a test of a nuclear device in coming weeks.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Pilots' union: fatigue is safety problem
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Travel/wireStory/southwest-pilots-union-fatigue-safety-problem-84045085
GIST	<p>DALLAS -- Union officials say pilots of Southwest Airlines pilots are suffering through an epidemic of fatigue due to poor scheduling practices by the airline, and that it is raising safety concerns.</p> <p>Union leaders said in an open letter Tuesday to Southwest CEO Robert Jordan and other executives that problems started last summer when the number of travelers returned nearly to normal pre-pandemic levels, and have gotten worse.</p> <p>The Southwest Airlines Pilots Association, which is currently negotiating with the airline for a new contract, said the number of pilots asking to be relieved from a flight assignment because of fatigue jumped 330% in March compared with the same month in pre-pandemic years.</p> <p>“April is already setting fatigue records,” they said. “Fatigue, both acute and cumulative, has become Southwest Airlines’ number-one safety threat.”</p> <p>Southwest spokeswoman Brandy King said the airline saw “a significant and steady decline” in pilots calling in fatigued after the airline made schedule changes in November. She said the March increase was expected, as weather-related flight cancellations disrupted schedules.</p> <p>King said the rise in fatigue calls in March shows that the system works and that the airline lets pilots determine if they are too tired to fly.</p> <p>Last summer, Dallas-based Southwest, the nation’s fourth-largest airline, was plagued by flight cancellations due partly to staffing shortages. The airline responded by hiring several thousand workers, executives have said.</p> <p>Airlines persuaded thousands of employees to quit during the worst of the pandemic after air travel plummeted and airline revenue collapsed. Since then, travel has picked up — the number of people flying in the U.S. topped 2 million a day in March, nearly 90% of pre-pandemic numbers. Unions at Southwest and other airlines have called on their companies to hire more pilots.</p> <p>In recent days, JetBlue Airways said it would trim some flights this summer because of staffing issues, and Alaska Airlines has blamed a pilot shortage for a surge in cancellations and delays.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Extreme weather ushers in spring
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/record-snow-tornadoes-wildfires-forecast-wild-spring-weather/story?id=84030772
GIST	<p>Extreme spring weather is currently taking place throughout the country with record breaking storms happening from blizzards, to tornadoes, hail and even wildfires.</p> <p>Arkansas reported six tornadoes and softball sized hail Monday night with some damage being reported.</p> <p>As another storm moves West, record breaking snow has hit Portland, Oregon making this the first time the city has ever seen snow in April.</p> <p>On Monday, some areas throughout Oregon and Washington saw up to 15 inches of snow. This storm will continue to move east and many states are now on alert for blizzards, heavy snow and strong winds.</p> <p>45 million Americans who live from Texas to Minnesota are facing severe storm through the night. Texas, Louisiana, Iowa and Minnesota are just some of the states that are under a Tornado Watch.</p>

	<p>North Dakota has been battered with 3 feet of snow and a potentially record breaking blizzard is expected to slam the region. Snowfall rates are 2 to 3 inches per hour and travel is considered extremely dangerous on Tuesday.</p> <p>The severe threat shifts east on Wednesday as a moderate risk has been issued from Greenville, MS, just east of Little Rock to Memphis to Evansville, IN. There is a potential for wind gusts and tornadoes.</p> <p>It is expected that areas from New Orleans to Chicago are under threat for severe weather.</p> <p>Wildfires are beginning to break out across different states, causing evacuations to take place in New Mexico after the 'Big Hole Fire' burned over 300 acres and is still 0% contained. Strong gusty winds have caused the area to issue a red flag warning.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	04/12 Crypto expert jailed; advising NKorea
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/crypto/2022/04/12/id/1065498/
GIST	<p>A U.S. cryptocurrency expert was sentenced Tuesday to 63 months in prison for advising North Korea on how to create cryptocurrency services and blockchain technology to circumvent US sanctions over its nuclear program, court officials in New York said.</p> <p>Virgil Griffith, 39, had pleaded guilty to conspiring to violate U.S. law, in a bid to reduce the sentence for a crime that can carry up to 20 years behind bars.</p> <p>Prosecutor Damian Williams said "there is no question North Korea poses a national security threat to our nation, and the regime has shown time and again it will stop at nothing to ignore our laws for its own benefit.</p> <p>He said that Griffith had "admitted in court he took actions to evade sanctions, which are in place to prevent (North Korea) from building a nuclear weapon."</p> <p>In April 2019 Griffith gave a presentation in Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, on cryptocurrency and blockchain technology. He was arrested at Los Angeles airport in November the same year.</p> <p>At the conference, Griffith provided information on how North Korea could use the technology to launder money and evade sanctions, including through "smart contracts," according to the court.</p> <p>The prosecution said that after the presentation, Griffith "pursued plans to facilitate the exchange of cryptocurrency between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and South Korea, despite knowing that assisting with such an exchange would violate sanctions against the DPRK."</p> <p>The United States prohibits the export of goods, services or technology to North Korea without special permission from the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control.</p> <p>In addition to 63 months in jail, Griffith will spend three years on probation.</p> <p>Griffith holds a doctorate from the California Institute of Technology and has also worked on Ethereum, a Singapore-based global platform with blockchain technology for business and financial use, which has a cryptocurrency named after it.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 T-Mobile tried exclusive buy hacked data
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SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/k7w9mv/tmobile-hacked-bought-data-mandiant
GIST	<p>Last year, T-Mobile confirmed it was breached after hackers offered to sell the personal data of 30 million of its customers for 6 bitcoin, worth around \$270,000 at the time. According to court documents unsealed today and reviewed by Motherboard, a third-party hired by T-Mobile tried to pay the hackers for exclusive access to that data and limit it from leaking more widely.</p> <p>The plan ultimately failed, and the criminals continued to sell the data despite the third party giving them a total of \$200,000. But the news unearths some of the controversial tactics that might be used by companies as they respond to data breaches, either to mitigate the leak of stolen information or in an attempt to identify who has breached their networks.</p> <p>T-Mobile did not respond to a request for comment on whether it was aware the third party it hired had paid cybercriminals hundreds of thousands of dollars to stop leaking their data.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the Department of Justice unsealed an indictment against Diogo Santos Coelho, who it alleges is the administrator of a popular hacking site called RaidForums. Law enforcement also uploaded a banner to the RaidForums site announcing they had taken over its domain.</p> <p>Coelho was arrested in the United Kingdom in March. Included in the affidavit in support of request for his extradition to the United States is a section describing a particular set of data that was advertised on RaidForums in August.</p> <p>“On or about August 11, 2021, an individual using the moniker ‘SubVirt’ posted on the RaidForums website an offer to sell recently hacked data with the following title: ‘SELLING-124M-U-S-A-SSN-DOB-DL-database-freshly-breached.’”</p> <p>Later, Subvirt changed the thread title to “SELLING 30M SSN + DL + DOB database,” the document continues. The document does not name the victim company, instead referring to it as Company 3, but says another post confirmed that the data belonging to “a major telecommunications company and wireless network operator that provides services in the United States.</p> <p>The document goes on to say that this company “hired a third-party to purchase exclusive access to the database to prevent it being sold to criminals.” An employee of this third party posed as a potential buyer and used the RaidForums’ administrator’s middleman service to buy a sample of the data for \$50,000 in Bitcoin, the document reads. That employee then purchased the entire database for around \$150,000, with the caveat that SubVirt would delete their copy of the data, it adds. The purpose of the deletion would be that this undercover customer would be the only one with a copy of the stolen information, greatly limiting the chance of it leaking out further.</p> <p>That’s not what happened. The document says that “it appears the co-conspirators continued to attempt to sell the databases after the third-party’s purchase.”</p> <p>Company 3, the unnamed telecommunications firm that hired this third-party, was T-Mobile, according to Motherboard’s review of the timeline and information included in the court records. Motherboard first revealed news of the breach mentioned in the court document several days after the specific RaidForums threads mentioned. At the time Motherboard spoke to the person selling the data including SSNs and obtained samples of the data which confirmed the hacker had accurate information on T-Mobile customers. T-Mobile provided a statement at the time saying it was investigating the hack against its company. A day later, T-Mobile confirmed it had been breached.</p> <p>The court documents do not name the third-party that bought the data, nor do they describe what sort of company it was. But in a previous statement published in August, Mike Sievert, CEO of T-Mobile, said “Through our investigation into this incident, which has been supported by world-class security experts Mandiant from the very beginning, we now know how this bad actor illegally gained entry to our servers and we have closed those access points. We are confident that there is no ongoing risk to customer data from this breach.”</p>

Mandiant did not immediately respond to a request for comment on whether it was the third-party that paid cybercriminals \$200,000. In March [Mandiant announced](#) it was being acquired by Google.

Victim companies often hire incident response or threat intelligence firms after they have been hacked to discover how exactly they were breached and to take mitigation steps against any further exposure.

These companies can sometimes deploy controversial tactics, [such as “hacking back,”](#) where the firm will offensively strike back at the criminal hackers, perhaps by breaching their command and control or other servers to see what data was stolen, interfere with the hackers’ infrastructure, or try to glean information on who the hackers might be. After hacking group LAPSUS\$ targeted Nvidia, the group claimed in a post on its Telegram channel that someone had hacked into a machine the group was using to store the stolen Nvidia data and then deployed ransomware. The group alleged, without concrete evidence, this was done on behalf of Nvidia.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Smart buildings next cyberattack target?
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/cybersecurity/are-smart-buildings-the-next-target-for-cyberattacks/
GIST	<p>Smart buildings and IoT sensors and devices have revolutionized the traditional way of living. Smart building benefits like energy efficiency, cost reduction and improved tenant comfort and security have spurred increased demand worldwide — with the number of smart buildings expected to increase 9.9 percent by 2028.</p> <p>Today’s smart buildings rely on hundreds to thousands of IoT sensors and computers connected to local servers and the internet to automate functionalities like controlling lighting, climate and elevators, as well as fire detection, video surveillance and badge access. These sensors, used in conjunction with Building Automation System (BAS), provide a mountain of valuable insights and actionable data about building condition and performance. Yet, they often lack basic cybersecurity features, making them prone to cyberattacks. For example, BACnet, the data communication protocol for HVAC control, is deployed in an unencrypted format, making it vulnerable to be exploited by attackers.</p> <p>In addition, BAS systems are typically managed by engineers and building management firms, not IT departments or security firms. That can be problematic — especially if the BAS system is hacked.</p> <p>Weaponization of IoT devices</p> <p>Every IoT sensor has a unique IP address, enabling it to communicate and exchange data with other machines and serving as a potential access point for hackers to exploit. With the soaring number of IoT devices and converged operational technology (OT), an organization’s entry points have increased exponentially and its attack surfaces are especially vulnerable to malicious cyber threat actors. With a single compromised IoT device, an attacker can gain access into a corporate network and possibly the entire IoT/OT network.</p> <p>With a foothold in the network, cybercriminals can wreak havoc by disabling a building’s critical services, such as turning off the water, setting off fire alarms or keeping a hotel from issuing keycards to guests upon arrival, as in the Romantik Seehotel Jägerwirt cyberattack.</p> <p>While the Romantik Seehotel Jägerwirt cyberattack focused more on earning cash through ransomware, it shows the capabilities that cybercriminals maintain. On a more severe scale, these threat actors could weaponize the multitude of compromised IoT devices as botnets to launch brute force distributed denial of service attacks against the organization’s own infrastructure causing them to lose access to critical systems or steal confidential data. Armed with malware, the “enslaved” botnets could also be commanded to launch massive attacks on other organizations. One of the largest DDoS attacks involved a network of botnets comprised of compromised IoT devices that included CCTV cameras and personal video recorders.</p>

Fighting back and keeping IoT devices secure

The proliferation of IoT devices could open the floodgates for cyberattacks threatening the security of smart buildings. A recent report indicated that in 2019 [nearly 40 percent](#) of 40,000 smart buildings were impacted by a cyberattack. That in mind, it's critical that organizations get ahead of the onslaught of threats by implementing security best practices including:

1. Strong password policies: It can't be stated enough that one of the easiest ways that attackers compromise an IoT device is due to its weak, guessable or default passwords. In fact, [70% of IoT devices](#) are still using the factory-set default passwords. Having strong password policies that entail long and unique passwords help prevent cyberattacks.
2. Robust patch management: The biggest security hurdle with IoT devices is the inability to easily upgrade or patch them. Most IoT devices are often too critical to stop operations for software updates. Developing policies to define processes for different types of upgrades from bug fixes to new releases to emergency updates will help to make your IoT update process more robust.
3. Segment your network: Organizations can minimize the impact of an IoT attack from spreading to other parts of the network by separating out critical systems, such as BAS systems, from the rest of the network.

Most of the attacks on smart buildings were due to malicious actors attempting to compromise computers controlling the BAS. To secure the BAS system, organizations should hide the BAS system from the rest of the network and the internet. If an IoT device is compromised, hackers will not be able to access the BAS system and other critical systems in the network.

These efforts go a long way in helping prevent unauthorized access to devices, network and data.

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HEADLINE	04/13 Enemybot: new Mirai, Gafgyt hybrid botnet
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/enemybot-a-new-mirai-gafgyt-hybrid-botnet-joins-the-scene/
GIST	<p>A new botnet is targeting routers, Internet of Things (IoT) devices, and an array of server architectures.</p> <p>On April 12, cybersecurity researchers from FortiGuard Labs said the new distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) botnet, dubbed Enemybot, borrows modules from the infamous Mirai botnet's source code, alongside Gafgyt's.</p> <p>The Mirai botnet was responsible for a massive DDoS attack against Dyn in 2016. Mirai's source code was leaked online in the same year, and even now, botnets utilizing parts of the malicious network continue to be weapons of choice for threat actors.</p> <p>Gafgyt/Bashlite code is also public, and according to FortiGuard, the new Enemybot employs elements of both botnets in its attacks, joining the likes of Okiru, Satori, and Masuta.</p> <p>Keksec is thought to be the botnet's operator. Keksec, also known as Necro or Freakout, is a prolific threat group connected to DDoS assaults, cyberattacks against cloud service providers, and cryptojacking campaigns.</p> <p>According to Lacework, the threat group is also the developer of a Tsunami DDoS malware variant called "Ryuk," although this is not to be confused with the Ryuk ransomware family.</p> <p>Enemybot was first discovered in March 2022. The botnet uses Mirai's scanner module and bot killer, which checks for running processes in memory and terminates any competitors based on a selection of keywords.</p> <p>The team has described the botnet as an "updated and "rebranded" variant of Gafgyt_tor" due to its heavy reliance on botnet functions sourced from Gafgyt's codebase.</p>

Return to Top	<p>Enemybot will attempt to compromise a wide range of devices and architectures through techniques including brute-force attacks and vulnerability exploitation.</p> <p>Seowon Intech, D-Link, Netgear, Zhone, and D-Link routers are targeted, as well as iRZ mobile routers and misconfigured Android devices. The threat actors will try to exploit both old, patched vulnerabilities and newer security issues such as Log4j.</p> <p>When it comes to architecture, Enemybot isn't too picky. Desktop and server systems on arm, arm64, Darwin, and BSD are attacked, alongside many others.</p> <p>"This mix of exploits targeting web servers and applications beyond the usual IoT devices, coupled with the wide range of supported architectures, might be a sign of Keksec testing the viability of expanding the botnet beyond low-resource IoT devices for more than just DDoS attacks," the researchers say.</p> <p>Once the malware has compromised a device or server, a text file is loaded with cleartext messages, such as: "ENEMEYBOT V3.1-ALCAPONE - hail KEKSEC, ALSO U GOT haCkED MY [REDACTED] (Your device literally has the security of a [shitty device] / [smart doorbell])."</p> <p>Enemybot then grabs binaries, depending on the target architecture, and executes a range of DDoS-related commands.</p> <p>The malware can also use a range of obfuscation methods to hinder analysis and hide its presence. The botnet's command-and-control (C2) server is hosted on a .onion domain, only accessible via the Tor network.</p> <p>Enemybot is still under active development.</p> <p>"We expect that more updated versions will be distributed in the wild soon," the researchers say. "FortiGuard Labs will keep monitoring this botnet."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Hackers simple trick hide Windows malware
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/microsoft-these-hackers-are-using-a-simple-trick-to-hide-their-windows-malware/
GIST	<p>Microsoft has exposed Tarrask, a piece of malware from a likely China-backed, state-sponsored hacking group that targets Windows machines by creating invisible scheduled software updates.</p> <p>The Windows maker has attributed the malware to Hafnium, the same hacking group that the US and UK blamed on Exchange Server hacks last year.</p> <p>Tarrask is a simple piece of malware that creates unwanted scheduled tasks on Windows machines to remain on it after a reboot. The malware utilizes the Windows Task Scheduler, which admins can legitimately use to automate tasks such as software updates for browsers and other apps, but in this case the attackers are using it for nefarious reasons.</p> <p>Scheduled tasks have become a popular manner of hacking Windows machines for persistence. Microsoft found the Russian hackers behind the SolarWinds supply chain hack were also using scheduled tasks to gain persistence on a machine.</p> <p>"We've found that threat actors commonly make use of this service to maintain persistence within a Windows environment," Microsoft notes in a blogpost, and despite its "simplicity" it's effective.</p> <p>Tarrask malware generates certain registry keys upon the creation of a scheduled task, whether using the Task Scheduler graphical user interface or the schtasks command line utility.</p>

In this case, the use by hackers of Windows Task Scheduler was part of a broader attack on the Zoho Manage Engine Rest API authentication bypass vulnerability, tracked as [CVE-2021-40539](#). Microsoft was [tracking exploitation of this bug in November](#) because China-backed hackers were using Zoho's password management and single sign-on software to compromise Windows machines with the Godzilla web shell.

Microsoft says Hafnium hackers were using this combination of legitimate Windows services and Zoho's bug from August 2021 to February 2022 to target organizations in the telecommunication, internet service provider and data services sector. In mid-2021, the group had [targeted](#) disease researchers, law firms, higher education institutions, defense contractors, policy think tanks, and NGOs.

Tarrask creates hidden scheduled tasks, but also creates additional actions in order to hide the scheduled tasks from detection by antivirus.

Microsoft offers instructions as to how defenders can manually check the registry tree to see whether attackers have created these unwanted scheduled tasks.

Microsoft acknowledges that Hafnium hackers have developed a "unique understanding of the Windows subsystem" and use it to "hide in plain sight".

As Microsoft notes, the methods used by this attack group are "problematic" for systems that don't get rebooted that often. These can include critical systems like domain controllers and database servers.

Microsoft has some steps for admins to take to ensure these hidden scheduled tasks can be detected.

"The threat actors in this campaign used hidden scheduled tasks to maintain access to critical assets exposed to the internet by regularly re-establishing outbound communications with C&C infrastructure. Remain vigilant and monitor uncommon behavior of your outbound communications by ensuring that monitoring and alerting for these connections from these critical Tier 0 and Tier 1 assets is in place," it said.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Russian group tried to blackout Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/critical-infrastructure/russia-allegedly-targeted-ukrainian-energy-with-updated-destructive-industroyer
GIST	<p>Researchers at ESET, working with Ukraine's CERT, identified an updated version of the destructive ICS malware Industroyer set to disrupt Ukraine's supply of electricity.</p> <p>Industroyer, previously linked to the Russian actor Sandworm and also tracked as CrashOverride, was first seen in 2016 and was purpose-built to disrupt the energy sector. The new malware, which ESET has dubbed "Industroyer2," was found in Ukrainian electrical substations and, if not caught in time, would have deployed on Friday, April 8, according to the firm.</p> <p>During Russia's invasion of Ukraine, much has been made so far of Russia's reluctance to use cyberwarfare — opting against flashy attacks on infrastructure. Several more subdued attacks, including attacks on internet infrastructure than impacted German wind turbines, have been detected, though none had so far been concretely linked to Russia.</p> <p>An attack on energy would match the public conception of cyberwarfare. And ESET is making a very firm attribution of the attack to Sandworm, an actor previously attributed to Russia by the United States Department of Justice. ESET does not attribute attacks to specific countries.</p> <p>"We assess with high confidence that the APT group Sandworm is responsible for this new attack," wrote ESET Research in a blog Tuesday morning.</p>

The blog says that Sandworm attempted several attacks in conjunction with Industroyer, including CaddyWiper, ORCSHRED, SOLOSHRED and AWFULSHRED. [CaddyWiper](#), one of several new wipers seen in Ukraine since the beginning of the war, had not been tied to a specific actor before these attacks.

ESET has not identified the initial vectors for compromise used in the attacks.

Industroyer2 differs from the 2016 version in a few ways. Both the new and old versions are highly configurable, but the new version hardcodes configuration details into each build rather than include a .INI file. That means new software would need to be compiled each time a new configuration is selected.

The new version only implements the IEC-104 protocol to talk with industrial equipment, including the relays used in electrical substations. The first version included more protocols. Industroyer2 can communicate with multiple devices at a time. The new version also replaces a log file with easy-to-understand messages with one recording error codes, which ESET believes is an attempt to obfuscate the attack.

"The analysis is still ongoing in order to determine what are the exact actions taken for each device. We believe that this component is able to control specific ICS systems in order to cut power," wrote ESET.

ORCSHRED, SOLOSHRED, AWFULSHRED were also discovered on the network of the energy company, a combination of a Linux worm (ORCSHRED) with a Solaris wiper (SOLOSHRED) and LinuxWiper (AWFULSHRED).

Indicators of compromise are included in the blog.

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HEADLINE	04/13 Account takeover to surpass malware threat
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/cybercrime/account-takeover-poised-to-surpass-malware-as-the-no-1-security-concern
GIST	<p>As most researchers and financial executives can attest, virtually all types of fraud have dramatically risen over the past two years. However, attackers taking over legitimate financial accounts have become even more of a favorite with cybercriminals than most fraud schemes.</p> <p>Many major recent research reports have pointed out that account takeover (ATO), a form of identity theft where bad actors access legitimate bank accounts, change the account information and passwords, and hijack a real customer's account, has skyrocketed since last year. According to Javelin Research's annual "Identity Fraud Study: The Virtual Battleground" report, account takeover increased by 90% to an estimated \$11.4 billion in 2021 when compared with 2020 — representing roughly one-quarter of all identity fraud losses last year.</p> <p>Like many types of financial fraud, cyber thieves are betting on the fact that if they attempt to seize a large number of legitimate accounts, eventually they will get a payoff.</p> <p>"Account takeovers are a numbers game," said Gal Diskin, co-founder and chief technology officer for Authomize. "The more accounts that an organization has, the bigger their risk that some of them will be compromised."</p> <p>Account takeovers often piggyback off of previous attacks, making these crimes a way for hackers to make the most out of stolen information. Diskin pointed out that account takeovers most commonly happen when a password is "taken from another data leak and reused for different accounts. But there are a variety of risky scenarios that can lead to compromise."</p> <p>In its most recent quarterly financial crime report, Feedzai, a cyber-risk management provider to the financial industry, cited the growing threat from account takeover, which topped the list of top fraud scams last year, rising from fourth place in 2020.</p>

CyberEdge Group, also released research just last week that corroborates the same findings about ATO. In its 2022 "[Cyberthreat Defense Report](#)," which surveyed 1,200 IT security personnel worldwide, account takeover was one of the two most pervasive and expanding threats (along with malware).

The CyberEdge research also predicts this type of pernicious fraud will continue to rise this year and beyond.

"ATO attacks are poised to overtake malware as the number one concern," according to the CyberEdge Group research, adding that concerns for ATO and credential stuffing saw the biggest increase of any risk for IT security respondents.

"Malware is still perceived as the most important threat, but account takeover and credential abuse attacks moved up from fourth place last year to number two this year... [and] ATO will take over the top spot in the next year or two," the CyberEdge report predicted.

Aside from being efficient, relatively easy and popular among cyber criminals, account takeover can be a jumping-off point to even more fraud incidents.

"Account takeover fraud poses a variety of risks to financial institutions because fraudsters will often weaponize a compromised bank account to perpetrate more fraud," according to Mike Bosserman, chief revenue officer at MANTL, which helps banks and credit unions develop digital account opening platforms.

For example, criminals will use the stolen bank account to fund a new bank account they open online for criminal activities, Bosserman said.

"Failing to catch a fraudster during the account opening process can lead to significant financial losses down the road for financial institutions," he said.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Ethical hacker steals crypto from client
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ethical-hacker-steals-600000-worth/
GIST	<p>A certified ethical hacker has been charged with multiple offenses after stealing a significant sum of cryptocurrency worth nearly \$600,000.</p> <p>Police in Pinellas Park, Florida, arrested 27-year old Aaron Daniel Motta after he reportedly stole an elderly client's Trezor hardware wallet and its password while providing security help.</p> <p>Clearwater Police said that Motta transferred the sum into various wallets he possessed.</p> <p>The victim has not yet been named, and various details have yet to be released.</p> <p>Police arrested the "certified ethical hacker" and charged him with grand theft and other computer offenses.</p> <p>Motta is currently self-employed, owning Motta Management & Mitigation Services. Motta also actively participates in Apple's bug bounty program.</p> <p>According to a Facebook page in Motta's name, he is listed as an IT manager, former cyber security engineer and ethical hacker, according to the Tampa Bay Times.</p> <p>A LinkedIn profile in Motta's name claims that he is a specialist in cybersecurity, penetration testing, offensive security and IT.</p>

	<p>The newspaper reportedly attempted to contact Motta for comment, but he failed to respond.</p> <p>Motta was taken to Pinellas County Jail on April 8. He was released Saturday morning after paying a \$60,000 bail, reports claim.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Ransomware breach victim numbers fall
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ransomware-victims-fall-q1-2022/
GIST	<p>The number of ransomware leak victims dropped by over a quarter between the end of 2021 and the first three months of 2022, but new groups proliferated, according to Digital Shadows.</p> <p>The threat intelligence vendor observed 582 organizations listed on ransomware leak sites in Q1 2022, a decrease of 25.3% compared to Q4 2021.</p> <p>It claimed the drop was due to reduced activity from some of the more prolific groups. These include Conti, which saw a 32% decrease in the number of victims, and Pysa, which did not name any during the quarter.</p> <p>In fact, the latter group appears to have disappeared, despite being the third most active in Q4 2021 with a particular focus on the education sector, according to Digital Shadows.</p> <p>However, its members and/or affiliates will likely disperse to newly branded entities.</p> <p>“In the first quarter of 2022, Digital Shadows observed the creation of many new ransomware groups and data leak sites. These included Stormous, Night Sky, Zeon, Pandora, Sugar, and x001xs,” the security vendor explained.</p> <p>“A trend that is typically observed between quarters is that new ransomware groups are created at a similar rate to groups being shut down. This is likely because affiliates frequently move from groups that are no longer active to those that are emerging. Groups also often shut down operations and rebrand, to avoid raising attention from law enforcement agencies.”</p> <p>As in the previous two quarters, however, LockBit 2.0 and Conti remained the most prolific of the 70 groups tracked by Digital Shadows, accounting for nearly 58% of incidents in Q1 2022.</p> <p>LockBit had nearly twice as many victims as Conti and is reportedly the only group to have leaked data on more than 200 organizations in a quarter since Q3 2021.</p> <p>While the first three months of the year were relatively quiet for ransomware groups, things are likely to pick up throughout 2022, with more SMBs targeted and potentially some spillover from the war in Ukraine, Digital Shadows warned.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 FBI seizes RaidForums; arrest founder
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/fbi-seizes-raidforums-arrests-founder-diogo-santos-coelho/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has announced the arrest of the “founder and chief administrator” of RaidForums, a popular marketplace for cybercriminals to leak, buy and sell hacked/stolen databases. The forum also leaked social security numbers (SSN), banking data including credit/debit card numbers, bank routing, account numbers, and login credentials.</p> <p>Diogo Santos Coelho, aka Omnipotent (21) of Portugal was arrested in the United Kingdom on January 31st, 2022 at the request of the United States, while the process of his extradition to the States is in process, Hackread.com has learned.</p>

For your information, Raidforums.com is one of the largest clearnet hacking forums. For instance, [LinkedIn's scraped databases](#) containing billions of user records were leaked on Raidforums.com. Facebook's 500 million scraped users database from 106 countries [was also leaked](#) on the same forum for free.

Some hackers sold databases depending on the value of the targeted company. However, the forum's popularity was merely for leaking and downloading stolen databases for free.

RaidForums.com Displays Seizure Notice

Raidforums.com was having connectivity issues since the beginning of 2022. On January 30th, 2022, the forum went offline and only came back online on February 12th, 2022 raising concerns if the forum had been infiltrated by law enforcement.

On February 25th, 2022, in an exclusive report, [Hackread.com reported](#) about the seizure of RaidForums' domain, however, at that time, the forum only displayed a login page (apparently) sniffing login credentials of users.

Now, Raidforums.com's homepage along with its backup domains Rf.ws and Raid.lol have been seized and displays the "This Domain Has Been Seized" notice uploaded by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The notice also reveals that the seizure of RaidForums.com was possible after international collaboration between the FBI, Europol, the National Crime Agency (NCA) of the United Kingdom, the Swedish Police Authority, Romanian National Police, the IRS, and other internal law enforcement partners.

Operation Tourniquet

In a separate arrest linked to RaidForums, the National Crime Agency (NCA) of the United Kingdom also arrested a 21-year-old suspect from Croydon, London in March 2022. The agency also seized £5,000 (\$6500) in cash, thousands in US dollars, and put a freeze on crypto assets worth more than half a million dollars.

According to NCA's [press release](#), the operation against RaidForums was dubbed Operation Tourniquet in which several other arrests have also been made by authorities.

Charges Against Diogo Santos Coelho

The US Justice Department's [press release](#) published Tuesday, April 12, 2022, [revealed](#) a six-count indictment against Coelho in the Eastern District of Virginia; charging him with conspiracy, access device fraud, and aggravated identify theft in connection with his role as the chief administrator of RaidForums. According to the indictment, between Jan. 1, 2015, and on or about Jan. 31, 2022, Coelho allegedly controlled and served as the chief administrator of RaidForums, which he operated with the help of other website administrators.

New RaidForums is Already Online

Although taking down of RaidForums is an achievement for the law enforcement authorities on a global level, the new RaidForums has been online since early March 2022. Named Breached Forums, the platform was launched by an active Raidforum.com user and prominent hacker going by the online handle of "Pompompurin."

BreachedForums is the exact copy of Raidforums following the same Modus Operandi as its predecessor forum. One can buy, sell and download databases for free along with offering malicious services to the public.

Nevertheless, the end of RaidForums comes as a blow to hackers and the cybercrime community around the world. At the time of publishing this article, RaidForums was displaying the seizure notice uploaded by the FBI.

HEADLINE	04/12 Anonymous hits Russian ministry of culture
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/anonymous-hits-russian-ministry-of-culture-leaks-446gb-of-data/
GIST	<p>The Anonymous hacktivists collective has targeted the Russian Ministry of Culture and leaked 446 GB worth of data online. The cyberattack was carried out as part of the collective's ongoing operation OpRussia against the country's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Anonymous, as we know it, is a group of hacktivists that announced a cyberwar against Russia after the country invaded Ukraine in late February 2022. The latest to suffer a data leak is Russia's Ministry of Culture. As seen by Hackread.com, the group has leaked 446 GB of data stolen from the ministry.</p> <p>One of the Anonymous representatives on Twitter (@YourAnonTV) also confirmed the attack in their tweet.</p> <p>According to Emma Best, journalist, and co-founder of a non-profit whistleblower organization DDoSecrets Distributed Denial of Secrets, aka DDoSecrets, the enormous data dump is now available on their official website.</p> <p>The organization also analyzed the data revealing that among other information it also includes 30,000 emails from the Russian Culture Ministry (Министерство культуры Российской Федерации). The ministry manages state policy about cinematography, art, copyright, archives, censorship, and cultural heritage.</p> <p>700 GB of Data, 500,000 Emails Leaked So Far</p> <p>Since the beginning of the Ukraine and Russia conflict, Anonymous and its affiliates have published more than 700 GB of data claimed to be stolen from the Russian government entities. Here is an updated list of the entities targeted under Anonymous-backed #OpRussia.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forest 2. Aerogas 3. VGTRK 4. Petrofort 5. Mosekspertiza 6. Marathon Group 7. Capital Legal Services 8. Tver Governor's office 9. Blagoveshchensk City Administration 10. Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation 11. Dept. for Church Charity and Social Service of the Russian Orthodox Church <p>Source- DDoSecrets</p> <p>Around 150 GB of data was leaked after Blagoveshchensk hacking, and 116 GB of emails from the Tver region governor and administration have been leaked. Anonymous claims to have access to at least 600,000 emails from the 712GB of data from these entities. Since the beginning of the way, Anonymous has claimed to have posted over 2 million Russian emails online.</p> <p>Anonymous Vows More Attacks on Russia</p> <p>It is no secret that Anonymous is standing strong with Ukraine over the ongoing conflict between the two countries. The collectives have so far targeted both the government and the private sector to spread their message.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Ransom DDoS attacks at record lows
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ransom-ddos-attacks-have-dropped-to-record-lows-this-year/

GIST

Extortion denial-of-service activity, the so-called RDDoS (ransom distributed denial-of-service) attacks have taken a tumble in the first quarter of the year, according to recent statistics from Cloudflare.

During a RDDoS attack, the threat actor hits a target company with large amounts of data to cause a service outage. The attacker then [demands a ransom](#) to stop the assault.

Ransom DDoS

Threat actors figured out that causing an outage could be a strong incentive for many companies to pay up to become operational again, especially organizations that risk a significant financial impact.

It should be noted that RDDoS attacks are launched by a different type of threat actors than ransomware gangs, who [use DDoS to add more pressure](#) on the victim on top of file encryption and the threat to publish stolen data.

Cloudflare reports that ransom DDoS attacks have dropped drastically in 2022, with only 17% of its DDoS-targeted clients reporting an extortion in January, 6% in February, and just 3% in March.

That's a 28% decrease year over year and a 52% decrease compared to the last quarter of 2021 when ransom DDoS attacks spiked at 28% in the last month.

The reason for this drop remains unclear at this time.

On the rising trends reflected in Q1 2022 data, Cloudflare reports a whopping 164% YoY rise in application-layer DDoS attacks.

The most noteworthy trends within that category are a 5,086% QoQ increase in application-layer DDoS attacks against the consumer electronics industry and a 2,131% QoQ increase against online media firms.

Another concerning emerging trend is the reflection-amplification method, which we recently reported as something that has transcended theory and is already under active exploitation.

Reflection attacks start with a small packet reflected inside a closed network while its size gets amplified with each bounce. When reaching the possible upper limit, the resulting massive volume of traffic is channeled to the target.

An interesting in-the-wild exploitation case presented in Cloudflare's report is that of the Lantronix Discovery Protocol being used in a large number of IoT devices.

Attackers use 4-byte requests to target publicly exposed Lantronix devices, generating a 30-byte response, reaching an amplification ratio of 7.5x. While this is far from the most impressive ratio we've seen lately, it can still be very potent if large enough swarms of devices are recruited in these attacks.

By spoofing the source IP of the victim, the hackers can direct a large number of generated responses to a target, suddenly overwhelming them with an indirect attack.

Finally, Cloudflare reports a massive uptick in volumetric DDoS attacks, with those over 100 Gbps rising by 645% QoQ and those over 10 Mpps growing by over 300% QoQ.

As it has been the case for many years now, DDoS attacks aren't going out of fashion but instead change form, methods, and traffic mixing tricks, and return to knock at the door of vulnerable, poorly protected, and weak servers.

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HEADLINE 04/12 LockBit lurked months in a govt. network

SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/lockbit-ransomware-gang-lurked-in-a-us-gov-network-for-months/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>A regional U.S. government agency compromised with LockBit ransomware had the threat actor in its network for at least five months before the payload was deployed, security researchers found.</p> <p>Logs retrieved from the compromised machines showed that two threat groups had compromised them and were engaged in reconnaissance and remote access operations.</p> <p>The attackers tried to remove their tracks by deleting Event Logs but the pieces of the files remained allowed threat analysts to get a glimpse of the actor and their tactics.</p> <p>Initial compromise</p> <p>The initial access allowing the attack was a protective feature that one of the agency's technicians left disabled following a maintenance operation.</p> <p>According to researchers at cybersecurity company Sophos, the actor accessed the network through open remote desktop (RDP) ports on a misconfigured firewall and then used Chrome to download the tools needed in the attack.</p> <p>The toolset included utilities for brute-forcing, scanning, a commercial VPN, and free tools that allow file management and command execution, such as PsExec, FileZilla, Process Explorer, and GMER.</p> <p>Additionally, the hackers used remote desktop and remote management software like ScreenConnect, and later in the attack, AnyDesk.</p> <p>From there, the attackers spent time laying low and just tried to steal valuable account credentials to expand their compromise of the network.</p> <p>At some point, they snatched the credentials of a local server admin who also had Domain Administrator permissions, so they could create on other systems new accounts with administrator privileges.</p> <p>Upping the game</p> <p>In the second phase of the attack, initiated five months after the initial compromise, a more sophisticated actor appears to have taken over, leading Sophos to assume that a higher-level actor was now in charge of the operation.</p> <p>"The nature of the activity recovered from logs and browser history files on the compromised server gave us the impression that the threat actors who first broke in to the network weren't experts, but novices, and that they may later have transferred control of their remote access to one or more different, more sophisticated groups who, eventually, delivered the ransomware payload" - Sophos</p> <p>The new phase started with installing the Mimikatz and LaZagne post-exploitation tool for extracting credentials sets from the compromised server.</p> <p>The attackers made their presence more evident by wiping logs and performing system reboots via remote commands, alerting the system admins who took 60 servers offline and segmented the network.</p> <p>A second error during this incident response disabled endpoint security. From this point, the two parties engaged in an open confrontation of measures and countermeasures.</p> <p>"A steady stream of table-setting activities took place as the attackers dumped account credentials, ran network enumeration tools, checked their RDP abilities, and created new user accounts, presumably to give themselves options in case they were interrupted" - Sophos</p> <p>"On the first day of the sixth month of the attack, the attacker made their big move, running Advanced IP Scanner and almost immediately beginning lateral movement to multiple sensitive servers. Within</p>

	<p>minutes, the attacker has access to a slew of sensitive personnel and purchasing files," informs the report from Sophos.</p> <p>Sophos joined the response effort and shut down the servers that provided remote access to the adversaries, but part of the network had already been encrypted with LockBit.</p> <p>On a few machines, although the files had been renamed with LockBit's suffix, no encryption had taken place, so restoring them was a matter of reversing the renaming action.</p> <p>Takeaway</p> <p>The researchers say that implementing multi-factor authentication (MFA) protection would have lead to a different outcome, as it would have stopped the hackers from moving freely or at least significantly hinder their action on the compromised network.</p> <p>Another critical security feature that could have slowed down the threat actors is a firewall rule blocking remote access to RDP ports.</p> <p>Finally, this case highlights the issue of maintenance and incident response errors and the need to follow security checklists even in urgent situations.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 USPS 'non-delivery' text smishing scam
SOURCE	https://blog.malwarebytes.com/scams/2022/04/usps-your-package-could-not-be-delivered-text-is-a-smishing-scam/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>A scam is doing the rounds which begins with a text from what claims to be the US Postal Service. The SMS reads as follows:</p> <p><i>“[U.S. Postal Service] We’re sorry to let you know that your package could not be delivered. To reschedule a delivery please visit [bit(dot)ly]”</i></p> <p>I’ve never received an SMS from the US Postal Service, but I have to imagine they don’t use bit.ly redirect links in text messages. The bit.ly link hides the actual URL being sent to people’s phones. You can view stats for a bit.ly link by placing “+” at the end of the URL. Detailed stats about the shortener’s creation date, number of clicks, and more are available through this method. On this occasion, data is hidden with the message “This link has been flagged as redirecting to malicious or spam content”.</p> <p>Clicking through reveals the following warning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The link may be listed on a website blocklisting service. • The link may have been reported to Bitly by a member of the public. • The link may contain malware (software designed to harm your computer), attempt to collect your personal information for nefarious purposes, or otherwise contain harmful and/or illegal content. • The link may be attempting to hide the final destination. • The link may lead to a forgery of another website or may infringe the rights of others. <p>Not a promising start for our missing package. Shall we take a look at the final destination?</p> <p>Phishing for info</p> <p>The actual landing page, located at us(dot)awaiting(dot)host, claims to be a USPS parcel tracking page. It says:</p> <p><i>USPS Currently Awaiting Package</i></p> <p><i>Undeliverable as Addressed(UAA) Problem with Address</i></p> <p><i>USPS Allows you to Redeliver your package to your address in case of delivery failure or any other case. You can also track the package at any time, from shipment to delivery.</i></p>

	<p>It asks visitors to “verify address”, by filling in their name, address, city, state, ZIP code, phone number and email.</p> <p>Clicking Continue at this point would normally display a second page asking for payment information. At the time of writing, clicking continue triggers a .php URL and then redirects to the 3M science website. It’s likely the data entered has been submitted to the phisher, but why didn’t they ask for payment details too?</p> <p>Forgetful phishers or long-haul social engineering?</p> <p>Sometimes scammers simply forget to make sure their ruse sails smoothly from A to B. It may be that they’re only actually interested in grabbing name and address information for now via the website. The logical progression would be to follow up by phone, mail, or post.</p> <p>It’s also possible they realise they’ve attracted some heat and are trying desperately to put the flames out. The site is flagged via the bit.ly link and produces warning pages in browsers such as TOR. The creators may figure it’s not worth the potential risk of keeping payment detail requests online anymore – if they were there in the first place, that is.</p> <p>As for the security angle: Fake USPS delivery notification spam is a popular tactic for scammers, and USPS’s recent advisory on the topic includes instructions on how to report bogus SMS messages.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Takedown of hackers’ leaked data market
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/global-operation-takes-hackers-leaked-data-market-84034368
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- Western law enforcement agencies have dismantled an online marketplace used to buy and sell hacked and stolen personal data belonging to millions of people, and have brought criminal charges against the platform's founder and chief administrator, officials announced Tuesday.</p> <p>Authorities say the RaidForums website trafficked in hundreds of databases of sensitive data, including credit card and Social Security numbers and bank account information, that had been hacked or stolen from victims.</p> <p>In addition to seizing three domains that hosted the website, officials have also arrested 21-year-old Diogo Santos Coelho of Portugal, who prosecutors say controlled and administered the platform between 2015 and this past January, when he was taken into custody in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>The U.S. is seeking his extradition to federal court in Alexandria, Virginia, on charges including conspiracy, access device fraud and aggravated identify.</p> <p>"The takedown of this online market for the resale of hacked or stolen data disrupts one of the major ways cybercriminals profit from the large-scale theft of sensitive personal and financial information," said Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite Jr., head of the Justice Department's criminal division, said in a statement.</p> <p>The site, founded in 2015, offered special access and features for members willing to pay — including a “God” membership that prosecutors say enabled nearly unlimited access. The site also sold “credits” to members that enabled them to download means of identification and information from stolen databases, and also allowed them to earn credits by posting instructions on how to commit illegal acts, according to an indictment.</p> <p>“Disruption has always been a key technique in operating against threat actors online, so targeting forums that host huge amounts of stolen data keeps criminals on their toes,” said Edvardas Šileris, head of Europol’s European Cybercrime Centre. “Europol will continue working with its international partners to make cybercrime harder — and riskier — to commit.”</p>

	<p>The FBI and Justice Department and other Western law enforcement agencies, including Europol and agencies in Sweden, Portugal, Germany and the UK, were involved in the operation.</p> <p>Alex Holden, the founder of Hold Security, said RaidForums was the largest English-speaking forum and marketplace for cybercrooks and its takedown will be “a major problem for the bad guys who trade based on their reputation.”</p> <p>But as the criminals migrate to different forums, he said, “they will have to mark their territory, assert their position, which only means more breaches” and more online dumping of stolen data.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Ukraine: Russia hack on power grid foiled
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/ukraine-potent-russian-hack-power-grid-thwarted-84034426
GIST	<p>BOSTON -- Russian military hackers attempted to knock out power to millions of Ukrainians last week in a long-planned attack but were foiled, Ukrainian government officials said Tuesday.</p> <p>At one targeted high-voltage power station, the hackers succeeded in penetrating and disrupting part of the industrial control system, but people defending the station were able to prevent electrical outages, the Ukrainians said.</p> <p>“The threat was serious, but it was prevented in a timely manner,” a top Ukrainian cybersecurity official, Victor Zhora, told reporters through an interpreter. “It looks that we were very lucky.”</p> <p>The hackers from Russia's GRU military intelligence agency used an upgraded version of malware first seen in its successful 2016 attack that caused blackouts in Kyiv, officials said, that was customized to target multiple substations. They simultaneously seeded malware designed to wipe out computer operating systems, hindering recovery.</p> <p>Authorities did not specify how many substations were targeted or their location, citing security concerns, but a deputy energy minister, Farid Safarov, said “2 million people would have been without electricity supply if it was successful.”</p> <p>Zhora, the deputy chair of the State Service of Special Communications, said the malware was programmed to knock out power on Friday evening just as people returned home from work and switched on news reports.</p> <p>He said that power grid networks were penetrated before the end of February, when Russia invaded, and that the attackers later uploaded the malware, dubbed Industroyer2. The malware succeeded in disrupting one component of the impacted power station's management systems, also known as SCADA systems.</p> <p>Zhora would not offer further details or explain how the attack was defeated or which partners may have assisted directly in defeating it. He did acknowledge the depth of international assistance Ukraine has received in identifying intrusions and the challenges of trying to rid government, power grid and telecommunications networks of attackers. The helpers include keyboard warriors from U.S. Cybercommand, which declined comment.</p> <p>The Computer Emergency Response Team of Ukraine thanked Microsoft and the cybersecurity firm ESET for their assistance in dealing with the power grid attack in a bulletin posted online.</p> <p>Officials said the destructive attacks had been planned at least since March 23, and Zhora speculated it was timed by Russia to “invigorate” its soldiers after they took heavy losses in a failed bid to capture Kyiv, the capital.</p> <p>Zhora stressed that Russian cyberattacks have not successfully knocked out any power to Ukrainians since this invasion began.</p>

GRU hackers from a group that researchers call Sandworm twice successfully attacked Ukraine's power grid — in the winters of 2015 and 2016. U.S. prosecutors indicted six GRU officials in 2020 for using a previous version of the Industroyer malware to attack Ukraine's power grid by gaining control of electrical substation switches and circuit breakers.

In the 2016 attack, Sandworm hackers used Industroyer to turn circuit breakers on and off in a sequence designed to create a blackout, said Jean-Ian Boutin, director of threat research at ESET.

“We know that Industroyer still has the capability to turn off circuit breakers,” he said.

Working closely with Ukrainian responders, ESET also determined that the attackers had infected networks at the targeted plants with disk-wiping software.

Successfully activating the malware would have rendered plant systems inoperable, seriously hindering remediation and recovery and destroying the attackers' digital footprints, Boutin said.

One of the destructive malware varieties used in the attack, dubbed CaddyWiper, was first discovered by ESET in mid-March being used against a Ukrainian bank, he said.

Western prosecutors blame Sandworm for a series of high-profile cyberattacks including the most destructive, the 2017 NotPetya wiper virus that caused more than \$10 billion in damage globally by destroying data on entire networks of computers of companies doing business in Ukraine including those belonging to the shipper Maersk and the pharmaceutical company Merck.

Russia's use of cyberattacks against Ukrainian infrastructure during its invasion has been limited compared with experts' pre-war expectations. In the early hours of the war, however, an attack Ukraine blames on Russia knocked offline an important satellite communications link that also impacted tens of thousands of Europeans from France to Poland.

In another serious cyberattack of the war, hackers knocked offline the internet and cellular service of a major telecommunications company that serves the military, Ukrtelecom, for most of the day on March 28.

Zhora said “the potential of Russian (state-backed) hackers has been overestimated” and cited a number of reasons why he believes cyberattacks have not played a major role in the conflict:

— When the aggressor is pummeling civilian targets with bombs and rockets there is little need to hide behind covert cyberactivity.

— Ukraine has significantly upped its cyber defenses with the help of volunteers from sympathetic countries.

— Attacks as sophisticated as this effort to knock out power are complex and tend to require a lot of time.

“This is not an easy thing to do,” Zhora said.

Ukraine has been under steady Russian cyberattack for the past eight years, with Zhora noting that the attacks have tripled since the invasion when compared with the same period last year.

Russia has said its invasion was needed to protect civilians in eastern Ukraine, a false claim the U.S. had predicted Russia would make as a pretext for the invasion. Ukraine has called Russia's assault a “war of aggression,” saying it “will defend itself and will win.”

Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	04/12 TSA historical Amtrak passenger data
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/transportation/tsa-analyzes-historical-amtrak-passenger-data-against-terrorist-watch-list/
GIST	<p>The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has begun analyzing some historical Amtrak rail passengers' information against a terrorist watch list. Amtrak requested that the TSA begin the program and on December 1, 2021, TSA issued a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) for the "Amtrak Rail Passenger Threat Assessment."</p> <p>The resulting assessment included a historical review of passenger data covering a limited period of time. TSA is currently analyzing the results of the data provided by Amtrak for any potential security benefits.</p> <p>The PIA establishes rigorous privacy protections that Amtrak must follow to provide TSA with rail passenger personally identifiable information (PII) collected over the course of several months. The PIA also makes clear that Amtrak will provide TSA only historical passenger manifests—meaning manifests of already-completed travel—for rail travel on routes in the Northeast corridor during a several-month period. TSA is not vetting Amtrak travelers before they travel.</p> <p>In an April 8 statement, TSA said it published the PIA pursuant to the E-Government Act of 2002 because this assessment entailed a new receipt of personally identifiable information (PII) on members of the public for watch list matching. "The assessment was for research purposes only and the collection of data has ended," the statement said. "Analytic results shared with Amtrak by TSA contain no personally identifiable information."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Israel: fresh clashes w/Palestinian gunmen
SOURCE	https://www.timesofisrael.com/reports-of-fresh-clashes-between-idf-forces-and-palestinian-gunmen-in-jenin/
GIST	<p>Fresh clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian gunmen rocked the West Bank city of Jenin Tuesday.</p> <p>Jenin residents told AFP that new fighting had broken out after multiple gun battles in recent days.</p> <p>The Israel Defense Forces said security forces conducted arrests at the night and in the morning throughout the northern West Bank. It said troops came under fire by gunmen, who also detonated bombs against them. Soldiers returned fire. The military said no troops were injured.</p> <p>It was the fourth day of significant operations around Jenin amid a spate of deadly attacks in Israel, some of whose perpetrators came from the area.</p> <p>Palestinian official news agency Wafa said "clashes erupted" between young Palestinian men and Israeli soldiers "who fired live bullets, stun grenades and tear gas at them." Israeli forces had arrested four people from Jenin and the nearby village of al-Yamoun, it added.</p> <p>The military said several terror suspects were arrested and weapons confiscated. It said a man was also arrested in Nablus suspected of vandalizing the Jewish holy site known as Joseph's Tomb.</p> <p>Citing Palestinian sources, Channel 12 news reported that a large number of troops were involved in the operation, some of whom entered the home of the terrorist who carried out last week's deadly shooting in Tel Aviv.</p> <p>The family of gunman Ra'ad Hazem has two houses in the area — one in the Jenin refugee camp and another in the nearby village.</p>

Israeli security forces have sought to arrest the father and brother of Hazem for their alleged involvement in the attack. Hazem's father, Fathi, is a former security prisoner who previously served as an officer in the Palestinian Authority's security services in Jenin. He has praised his son for the killings and refused an Israeli summons for questioning.

On Sunday the Israeli military said troops [opened fire on a car](#) near Jenin in which two brothers of Hazem, who killed three Israelis in downtown Tel Aviv last week, were believed to be traveling. The IDF said it was aiming to stop the vehicle rather than kill the occupants. The car sped away.

A Palestinian teenager who was shot by the IDF during a raid aimed at capturing members of Hazem's family [died of his injuries](#) Monday.

Tensions have risen sharply between Israel and the Palestinians in recent weeks against the backdrop of repeated terror attacks in Israeli cities that left 14 people dead. The army has stepped up its West Bank activities in an attempt to crack down on the spiraling violence.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	04/12 Baby formula shortages; rationing
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/12/baby-formula-shortages-us-stores-rationing
GIST	<p>Stores across the US have started to ration baby formula while some others are reporting increasing shortages.</p> <p>The nationwide shortage in baby formula comes two months after a huge manufacturer recall which occurred as a result of illnesses and deaths among infants.</p> <p>In March, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a warning to consumers, urging them to be aware of certain products branded Similac, Alimentum and EleCare that have been recalled.</p> <p>The FDA launched an investigation after complaints emerged of bacterial infections in four infants who consumed powdered infant formula produced in Abbott Nutrition's facility in Michigan.</p> <p>According to the reports, all four infants were hospitalized and the bacterial infection may have contributed to the deaths of two of them.</p> <p>All four cases involved the <i>Cronobacter sakazakii</i> infection, which according to the FDA "can cause severe, life-threatening infections (sepsis) or meningitis (an inflammation of the membranes that protect the brain and spine)". Cronobacter infections are rare but are especially high-risk for newborns, the agency said.</p> <p>As a result of the recall, approximately 30% of popular baby formula brands may be sold out across the nation, according to an analysis by Datasembly, which assessed supplies in over 11,000 stores.</p> <p>According to Ben Reich, CEO of Datasembly, the baby formula shortage is at a higher level than any other product.</p> <p>"Inflation, supply chain shortages and product recalls have brought an unprecedented amount of volatility to the category, and we expect to continue to see baby formula as one of the most affected categories in the market," he told USA Today.</p> <p>Last month, the FDA released details of its investigation into Abbott, the baby formula maker, which found that the company did not maintain sanitary conditions at its Michigan plant. According to a USA</p>

Return to Top	<p>Today report, Abbott did not maintain clean surfaces that were used in producing and handling the formula.</p> <p>FDA investigators also discovered a history of contamination with <i>Cronobacter</i>, which includes eight instances between fall 2019 and February 2022.</p> <p>In February, Abbott announced a voluntary recall of its powder formulas manufactured in its plant in Sturgis, Michigan.</p> <p>“As part of Abbott’s quality processes, we conduct routine testing for <i>Cronobacter sakazakii</i> and other pathogens in our manufacturing facilities. During testing in our Sturgis, Michigan, facility, we found evidence of <i>Cronobacter sakazakii</i> in the plant in non-product contact areas. We found no evidence of <i>Salmonella</i> Newport,” the company said in a statement.</p> <p>It has since recalled the powder formula manufactured in the facility with an expiration of 1 April 2022 or later.</p> <p>According to Datasembly, the states that have been hardest hit by the shortage are Minnesota, which experienced the highest out-of-stock percentage in the week of 13 March at 54%, Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota and Texas. All these states have a 40 or higher out-of-stock percentage.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Harmful chemicals discount store products
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/12/harmful-chemicals-toys-discount-stores-us
GIST	<p>An alarming number of products purchased at US dollar stores, including many children’s toys, contain harmful chemicals, according to a report released today.</p> <p>Researchers tested 226 products purchased at five popular retailers for chemicals, including phthalates and lead, and found that 120, or more than half, had at least one chemical of concern. Among the products that tested positive were colorful baby toys and Disney-themed headphones.</p> <p>“As a parent, I should be able to buy a product without expecting to poison my child,” said Jose Bravo, national coordinator at the Campaign for Healthier Solutions, a coalition that calls on dollar stores to phase out hazardous chemicals from their products.</p> <p>The tests found chemicals like lead and phthalates, which is associated with higher rates of childhood cancer. They also found products like fake teeth that were made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), which can contain endocrine-disrupting chemicals and can harm reproductive and cognitive development. Children are especially vulnerable to low-level exposure found in bottles, toys, appliances and personal care products.</p> <p>“There are known substitutes for these hormone-disrupting chemical hazards,” said Jeff Gearhart, research director of Ecology Center Healthy Stuff Lab, the group which tested the products. “The fact that they continue to be used in these low cost products that dollar stores sell is a real problem.”</p> <p>Also testing positive for these potentially harmful chemicals were canned foods, which were found to have BPA coating, an endocrine disruptor that can leach into food and drinks. Non-stick cookware and popcorn packaging had presence of PFAS, the waterproof “forever chemical” that has been associated with wide ranging health effects, including cancer, thyroid disease, and liver damage. The packaging of microwavable popcorn also tested positive for PFAS.</p> <p>In addition, paper receipts from all five retailers tested positive for bisphenol S, an analog of BPA present in thermal paper and plastics.</p>

	<p>At 34,000, there are more dollar stores in the US than Walmarts, and they usually sell inexpensive, mass produced goods from overseas. They are generally concentrated in low-income areas and communities of color, and they remain an affordable option for groceries, household items and other goods, particularly as consumer prices rise due to inflation.</p> <p>“Everybody should have access to healthier, lower-hazard products and it shouldn’t depend on what you can afford,” Gearhart said.</p> <p>The two biggest chains, Dollar General and Dollar Tree, have adopted chemicals policies that ban certain toxic chemicals, including lead and BPA in children’s products. The federal government prohibits phthalates in children’s toys and child care products, but experts say protections should extend to all manner of items.</p> <p>“If a child gets their hands on a product, it becomes a children’s product whether or not it meets the regulatory definition,” said Gearhart, referencing headphones adorned with Disney characters which tested positive for lead, phthalates and phosphates. A cheap pair of headphones, even though it’s not considered a toy, is still something that kids can put on their head and chew on the wires, he said.</p> <p>Bravo says that businesses don’t have the capacity to test every product sold, adding that the federal government only intervenes when someone gets sick or dies. One such case is the Johnson & Johnson withdrawal of its talc-based baby powder from US and Canada in 2020 after asbestos was found in the product.</p> <p>“Manufacturers and retailers need to step up because there are gaps in the regulatory system,” Gearhart says.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Sunscreen chemicals in Mediterr. seagrass
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/12/sunscreen-chemicals-accumulating-in-mediterranean-seagrass-finds-study
GIST	<p>Chemicals found in sunscreen lotions are accumulating in Mediterranean seagrass, a study has found.</p> <p>Scientists discovered ultraviolet filters in the stems of Posidonia oceanica, a seagrass species found on the coast of Mallorca and endemic to the Mediterranean Sea.</p> <p>The researchers believe the contamination is the result of recreational activities and waste discharges in the tourist destination.</p> <p>“This marine enclave is impacted by port activities, water discharge and tourism,” said Dr Silvia Díaz Cruz, co-author of the study published in Marine Pollution Bulletin. “Since the Mediterranean Sea is shallow, small and very enclosed, concentrations of UV-absorbing chemicals can reach high [levels].”</p> <p>Samples found varying concentrations of sunscreen components, including oxybenzone, avobenzone 4-methyl, benzylidene camphor, benzophenone-4 and methyl parabens.</p> <p>While the full impact of these chemicals on seagrass remains unknown, the researchers are concerned about potential harmful effects.</p> <p>“If we find that sunscreens affect the photosynthesis and productivity of seagrasses beyond accumulation, we will have a problem since these seagrasses play important ecological roles in the Mediterranean coasts,” said co-author Prof Nona Agawin.</p> <p>Posidonia oceanica forms extensive meadows in the coastal Mediterranean and plays a crucial role in maintaining a healthy ocean ecosystem. Seagrass meadows are home to diverse marine species and act as carbon stores, while also helping buffer coastal areas against erosion.</p>

	<p>Previous research has found that certain UV-filtering sunscreen chemicals can have damaging effects on fish, turtles and dolphins, including disrupting their reproductive systems and harming their development.</p> <p>Coral reefs are also affected and these chemicals have been prohibited in tourism destinations such as Hawaii, Florida and Palau. Similar legislation has yet to be introduced in Mediterranean countries.</p> <p>The researchers emphasise the need for further research on the effects of UV-filtering chemicals in seagrass meadows. “If we find which sunscreen components are harmful for seagrasses, then we should better regulate and provide alternatives to protect the beach-goers and also the seagrasses,” said Agawin.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 PFAS: no escape from ‘forever chemicals’
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/12/us/pfas-chemicals-fast-food.html
GIST	<p>Based on nothing more than their name, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances certainly don’t sound like something you’d want to find in your burger wrapper. But according to a recent investigation by Consumer Reports, they’re very much there — as well as in your salad bowl, fry bag and sandwich wrap.</p> <p>So what are these virtually indestructible compounds, created in a lab in 1938 by a 27-year-old chemist? And how worried do you need to be about them?</p> <p>This is what you should know about PFAS.</p> <p>Where am I most likely to run into this stuff? As one researcher put it: “everywhere.”</p> <p>PFAS are in your shampoo bottle, your stain-resistant couch, your dental floss, your bicycle lubricant. And when these multipurpose compounds are used in food packaging, they have a way of transferring to the food itself. To say that PFAS are difficult to avoid is an understatement.</p> <p>Although these substances have been in use for eight decades, regulators have only recently acquired the scientific understanding and technical capacity needed to test for them at the very low concentrations — measured in parts per trillion — at which they’re present in food, according to the Food and Drug Administration.</p> <p>In light of those advances, the F.D.A. recommends not reading too much into the fact that a given product might have “detectable” levels of the chemicals. “Even when there have been detectable levels of PFAS,” the agency said, “our safety assessments have shown no cause for avoiding these foods.”</p> <p>Cava, a fast-casual Mediterranean restaurant whose packaging has high levels of PFAS, according to Consumer Reports, began phasing out the compounds from its products in August, but has run into supply chain issues that delayed the process, a Cava representative said in a statement.</p> <p>Nathan’s Famous began phasing out PFAS from its wrappers in 2020, completely eliminating its traditional red and green striped bags, the company said, and will stop using products that include PFAS by design before the end of the year.</p> <p>McDonald’s and Burger King said they were committed to removing all PFAS from their packaging by the end of 2025.</p> <p>From packaging and products, PFAS have found their way into rainwater, soil, sediment, ice caps, and outdoor and indoor plants. The substances have been detected in the living tissues of animals around the world.</p>

“It’s in the Arctic. It’s in the polar bears. It’s in trees. It is at the bottom of the ocean,” Keith Vorst, an associate professor at Iowa State University who studies the levels of PFAS in products, said in an interview. “We have literally polluted our planet.”

OK, but *why* are they everywhere?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances are a group of over a thousand chemical compounds that were discovered in 1938 by a young chemist named Roy Plunkett who was working at DuPont at the time. Their first use was as the nonstick agent in Teflon.

They have since been added to an array of products to make them resistant to heat, water, oil and corrosion. The chemical composition of PFAS — they are created by fusing carbon and fluorine atoms — makes the compounds practically unbreakable.

“They’re called forever chemicals because they’re incredibly persistent,” said David Andrews, a senior scientist for the Environmental Working Group, an advocacy organization. “The carbon-fluorine bond itself doesn’t break apart in the environment, and so once the chemicals are released, they typically spread out.”

Because they don’t easily degrade, they can accumulate in our bodies and the environment when ingested or otherwise internalized.

Their indestructible nature also means that they can cross-contaminate everything they touch, Dr. Vorst said. And as we now know, everything they touch is, well, virtually everything around us.

As an example, Dr. Vorst said to imagine a factory that intentionally used PFAS in its products. Even if that factory completely stopped using the compounds today, traces of PFAS would still be found in the company’s products in 10 or 15 years if it continued to use the same production plant.

It can take four to 15 years for levels of PFAS to reduce by half in the human body, and it can take centuries for the substances to disappear from the environment, researchers said.

“A net-zero PFAS concentration is impossible,” Dr. Vorst said. “All we can hope for is getting as close to zero as possible.”

Do I need to be worried?

Long-term exposure to PFAS has been linked to an [increased risk of some cancers](#), [immune system suppression](#) and problems with [fetal development](#). Some PFAS contain compounds that could accumulate in the lungs and [have been linked to more severe cases of Covid-19](#).

“Once they get into the body, they like to hang out in the blood because they like to stick to proteins in our blood and interact with all sorts of different molecules,” said Jamie DeWitt, a professor of pharmacology and toxicology at East Carolina University. “That’s why we think they produce the health effects that they produce.”

And although scientists and regulators agree that PFAS should be taken out of use as soon as possible, they also say that the chemical is “not an immediate threat to health,” David A. Savitz, a professor of epidemiology at Brown University, said in an interview.

“It’s a subtle threat, so people have a hard time knowing what to make of it,” he added. “We want to curtail exposure, but it is not an immediate disaster.”

So how do you get rid of them? Are there any efforts to regulate?

In short, we’ll never get rid of them. At least not in our lifetimes.

Most current PFAS regulations concern [how much of the chemicals can be present in water](#), but regulations for their use in products [have generally been handled at a state level](#).

	<p>“Right now the biggest thing we can do is phase it out of production,” Dr. Vorst said. In the last decade, many companies have voluntarily removed PFAS from their products, and contamination rates in human blood have decreased, Dr. Savitz said.</p> <p>In October, the Biden administration revealed a plan to combat PFAS pollution. In the same month, the Environmental Protection Agency also released a “PFAS Strategic Roadmap,” in which it laid out plans for further research into PFAS and for the development of usage guidelines.</p> <p>But advocates say this might be too little, too late.</p> <p>Since the 1960s the Food and Drug Administration has been aware of how PFAS affect the body, Melanie Benesh, a legislative lawyer with the Environmental Working Group, said in an interview.</p> <p>The first evidence that PFAS were toxic to the body was submitted to the F.D.A. by DuPont, where the chemicals were created, in 1966. But the reports did not immediately spur new regulation.</p> <p>“That resulted in the ultimate lack of regulation and has left us scrambling to try and address this issue now,” Ms. Benesh added. “This was really a preventable crisis.”</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	04/12 Brooklyn shooting not terror investigation
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/04/12/brooklyn-nyc-subway-shooting-terrorism-investigation/7291368001/
GIST	<p>A chaotic scene of smoke, gunfire and panic broke out on a Brooklyn subway train during rush hour Tuesday morning in what witnesses and elected leaders have described as a "terrorizing" crime.</p> <p>But New York officials on Tuesday said they weren't investigating the shooting as terrorism "at this time," renewing questions about why crimes like mass shootings aren't always or immediately categorized as terrorism and how legal definitions don't completely capture the way crimes are experienced by communities.</p> <p>"This is terror. Someone attempted to terrorize our system," New York City Mayor Eric Adams told CNN on Tuesday afternoon.</p> <p>But Adams, who used similar phrasing in a brief video address posted online and subsequent TV interviews, cautioned that it is "premature" to determine whether the incident was an act of terrorism.</p> <p>As of Tuesday evening, police had identified a person of interest, and no one was in custody, city officials said. The FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force was assisting in the investigation.</p> <p>What is terrorism?</p> <p>There is no single definition of terrorism, even within the United States. Title 22 of the U.S. Code defines "terrorism" as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents."</p> <p>"Domestic terrorism" is defined under Title 18 as involving acts dangerous to human life that violate criminal law and appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping.</p>

"It comes down to the fact that terrorism is violence that is used for political ends," said Heidi Beirich, co-founder of the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism.

While a mass shooting that is based on an employment or familial dispute may be "horrific," Beirich said, if the crime doesn't have a political motive then it isn't categorized as terrorism.

Beirich noted the mass shootings at [Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston](#) in 2015, the [Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh](#) in 2018 and at a [Walmart in El Paso](#) in 2019 all had political elements and were categorized as terrorism.

Categorizing a crime as an act of terrorism impacts how a case is prosecuted and what the penalties will be, Beirich said. Terrorism also constitutes a societal challenge and has to be countered forcefully, she added.

"Terrorism is intended to instill fear in whatever communities the political motive is targeting, and thus has an impact far beyond just the violence that happens," she said.

A different kind of terror

James Hawdon, director of the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention at Virginia Tech, noted a random mass attack strikes a different kind of terror.

"Any kind of random act of mass shooting really affects us differently because we all think, well, is this gonna happen again?" he said. "There's no rhyme or reason to it, so there's no predictability of it. And so now, every time I get on a subway, I remember what happened in New York. It just increases the whole perception of risk of living our lives."

But it is too early to conclude the attack Tuesday was not an act of terrorism, said William Bratton, a former New York Police Department commissioner.

There was no immediate evidence pointing in that direction, such as a statement by the attacker that would suggest an ideological or political motive, Bratton said. But such evidence could surface later.

The former commissioner noted that the attack occurred in a large Asian American community, a fact that investigators will likely take into account given the [increased violence directed at Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders](#) amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"Is it terror or just a deranged individual?" Bratton said. "It's a question that might take some time."

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HEADLINE	04/12 Toronto police arrest man; random killings
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/4awmkd/toronto-alleged-killer-arrested-cache-of-guns
GIST	<p>Toronto police have arrested a man after he allegedly killed two strangers in downtown Toronto in two days, and say they have reason to believe he may have planned to kill more people.</p> <p>Around 5 p.m. on April 7, Kartik Vasudev was shot outside a Toronto subway station entrance. The 21-year-old was helped by a nearby paramedic but died of his injuries at the hospital. Police say the killing was "completely unprovoked" and that Vasudev had been shot several times. He was an international student, studying marketing at a local college.</p> <p>Just two days later, around 7 p.m. on April 9, police say a man walked up behind 35-year-old Elijah Eleazar Mahepath and shot him. Mahepath was killed within walking distance of where Vasudev was shot. Mahepath died on the scene.</p> <p>"Any death is tragic, but these men were completely innocent and their murders were absolutely random acts of violence," said Toronto Police Chief James Ramer.</p>

	<p>Police arrested Richard Edwin, 39, without incident at his Toronto apartment on April 10 and have charged him with two counts of first-degree murder. Police say they found a large number of weapons “on the floor next to him” at his property.</p> <p>“Given that he had already killed two apparent strangers, as we allege, and that a cache of firearms was located in his residence, we can reasonably conclude that the quick work of our investigators has prevented a further loss of life,” said Ramer.</p> <p>Among the weapons was a rifle that police believe would have been “capable of causing great carnage if used.” Edwin had no prior police record and was “lawfully in possession of the weapons.” Officers say they were able to track Edwin via security footage back to his home.</p> <p>Police say it’s too early to speculate on the motive and whether the victims’ race had anything to do with the killings. Toronto Police Homicide Detective Terry Browne said there was no verbal interaction between the accused and victims.</p> <p>“From what we saw, any interaction between the shooter and the victims was very, very quick and brief,” Toronto Police Homicide Detective Terry Browne told reporters. “We can’t say for certainty whether in fact he would have been able to see their ethnicity.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Secret Service duped in breach
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/04/12/secret-service-duped/
GIST	<p>Secret Service leaders are downplaying any risk to national security after four of its employees — including an agent assigned to protect first lady Jill Biden — were allegedly hoodwinked by two men impersonating federal agents and plying them with gifts, telling congressional committees and allies that the severity of the breach has been overblown by prosecutors and the media, according to people familiar with the conversations.</p> <p>But several former Secret Service officials warn that the alleged infiltration of the elite protection agency reveals a major vulnerability extending well beyond this particular case. They said the revelations suggest that agents who had regular access to the White House and the Biden family — and who are supposed to be trained to spot scammers or spies seeking to ingratiate themselves — were either too greedy or gullible to question a dubious cover story.</p> <p>“If you can compromise Secret Service personnel by cozying up to their agents and their uniformed officers, unwelcome sources can get to the president and the first family,” said Jim Helminski, a retired agency executive and former leader of Joe Biden’s vice-presidential detail.</p> <p>The case is the latest in a string of embarrassing security breaches and incidents of misconduct involving the Secret Service over the past decade. The scandals have included agents getting drunk and hiring prostitutes on a trip to Cartagena, Colombia, in 2012; an incident in 2014 when a wounded veteran was able to jump the White House fence and get past dozens of armed Secret Service officers and into the executive mansion; and an officer investigated last year after posting comments on Facebook in which she accused lawmakers who formalized President Biden’s win of treason.</p> <p>According to federal prosecutors, Arian Taherzadeh, 40, and Haider Ali, 35, posed as Department of Homeland Security agents and offered two agents and two officers with the Secret Service, as well as one DHS officer, a string of gifts beginning at least in February 2021 and possibly as early as February 2020. The gifts that prosecutors say were accepted included iPhones, surveillance systems, a drone, a flat-screen television, a case for storing an assault rifle, a generator, law enforcement paraphernalia and use of what Taherzadeh characterized as a government vehicle.</p> <p>The FBI also said the two Secret Service uniformed officers accepted free \$40,000-a-year rental apartments from Taherzadeh for about a year in The Crossing, a luxury Navy Yard apartment complex where the two suspects are alleged to have had unusual control over several apartments and where they</p>

had set up surveillance. One of the officers told investigators that Taherzadeh claimed DHS had approved extra rooms as part of his operations that the officer could live in free; the other said Taherzadeh claimed another federal law enforcement officer was living rent-free.

The FBI said searches conducted at the building last week found a stash of police weapons, access codes to federal agents' homes and equipment to create Personal Identification Verification cards that if programmed correctly can be used to access sensitive law enforcement computers. One witness also told authorities that Ali claimed to have ties to Pakistan's intelligence service, prosecutors said, though officials say they have not found evidence confirming such a claim.

Both men, who are charged with impersonating a federal law enforcement official, have denied any ill intent. Taherzadeh said he had "no intention of compromising any federal agent" and had provided them lavish gifts out of a "desire for friendship," while Ali said he had gotten carried away in a ruse he did not fully understand, according to documents filed in federal court Monday.

Prosecutors also revealed in court Tuesday that an internal Secret Service investigation inadvertently tipped off Taherzadeh to the ongoing criminal probe before the suspects were arrested, prompting the FBI and prosecutors to rush to get an arrest warrant last week.

A spokesperson for the Secret Service said in a statement the agency has found no damage to national security but takes the actions of the employees involved "extremely seriously." All four are on administrative leave and their security clearances have been temporarily suspended pending the investigation.

"The U.S. Secret Service is taking this matter extremely seriously and conducting an in-depth, methodical review of all aspects of this incident," Secret Service spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said. "Although this is an ongoing investigation, we have found no evidence of any adverse security impacts or improper access to sensitive information, systems or protected locations at this time. We continue to work closely with the FBI and the U.S. Attorney's Office on the criminal investigation and prosecution of the Defendants."

In their conversations on Capitol Hill and elsewhere, Secret Service officials have emphasized the lack of evidence of either foreign involvement or compromised information, according to the people familiar with the conversations, who requested anonymity to reveal details. Instead, agency officials are saying the case amounts to a small group of employees who unwisely let down their guard when befriended by two men who appear to be fraudsters and wannabe cops, these people said.

Some former Secret Service agents, however, say the incident shows how easily someone could target agency staffers to obtain highly classified information about both the president's movements and national security. They said the agency needs to study what weaknesses in policy or training may have allowed the situation to happen — and how it went undiscovered by the agency for up to two years. The case was uncovered only after a postal inspector was investigating an unrelated alleged assault on a mail carrier at the apartment building, officials said.

"The physical protection of the president and vice president is crucial to the functioning of our democracy," said one former Barack Obama-era agent, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to be candid about Secret Service vulnerabilities. "We have the first minority woman vice president. Both Biden and Harris are polarizing figures. Now we learn people who have access to ... [the White House], Harris and Biden can be duped?"

Prosecutors have emphasized their investigation is in an early stage as they work to understand the potential scope of the alleged scheme and the vulnerabilities it has created within the Secret Service, federal law enforcement and national security communities.

In a Sunday court filing urging the court to detain the two men, an assistant prosecutor to U.S. Attorney Matthew Graves wrote: “Each hour since their arrest, the Government learns more — and scarier — information about how Taherzadeh and Ali abused their fake authority.”

On Tuesday, prosecutors told the court they are now investigating whether any bribery occurred with the offer of such valuable items.

“It concerns us, the types of devices and favors that were given, and whether any may have been bribes,” said Assistant U.S. Attorney Joshua S. Rothstein. “As we mentioned, one of them protected the first lady. Others protected the White House and residence. When we have agents who may have been compromised, it causes grave concern for us.”

Elizabeth Alexander, the communications director for the first lady, said the White House does not comment on ongoing investigations and referred questions about the incident to the Secret Service.

But she said in a statement, “The First Family has the utmost confidence in the USSS and is grateful to them every day for their service and efforts to keep them safe.”

Helminski said he sees no obvious damage or danger to Biden and his family so far.

“I would agree it’s not that big a deal, but only because it got stopped before it became a big deal,” he added.

Helminski and other former agents said several details of the case are particularly worrisome, including the alleged offers of iPhones, Ali’s alleged intelligence claim and the Secret Service employees’ apparent willingness to accept highly dubious claims from strangers.

“The iPhones in my opinion are most disturbing of the items. Portable, [they] can be turned on remotely or carry small explosive device,” Helminski said. “The phones could capture vital information needed to cause intelligence harm to the president and the first family. This can be a serious security threat.”

Former agents also said it was alarming that the Secret Service was in the dark about the alleged ruse and may have never learned about it if not for the separate postal investigation. Some suggested the agency consider increased screening of employees, with yearly polygraphs, as the FBI and military do for sensitive positions.

“The Secret Service’s current safeguards are not enough,” said the Obama-era agent. “No tripwires were activated here.”

Currently, the Secret Service questions agents every five years to renew their top-secret security clearances. The questions are geared to spot problems, such as agents who may be leaking information or have financial or personal problems that make them vulnerable to blackmail. In one case, the agency discovered that a top supervisor on Obama’s detail had been lying to the agency and hiding both long-standing and short-term sexual relationships he had with multiple foreign nationals. Officials only learned of the scope of his coverup after he failed a polygraph in a five-year security clearance update.

Lawyers for Taherzadeh and Ali say the two had no criminal scheme in mind and that prosecutors “have jumped to the wildest conspiracy theories possible over the most scant of evidence.”

Defense lawyers told the court that immediately after the two men’s arrests, prosecutors had suggested the government would not seek to detain them. But prosecutors changed their plans as the investigation proceeded. They subsequently claimed that Ali, a naturalized U.S. citizen, posed a risk of flight because of his past foreign travel. Ali has traveled at least twice to his native Pakistan, once to Egypt and once to Iraq, although the travel was not recent, Rothstein said.

	<p>Ali also traveled to Iran between July 2019 and January 2020, the prosecutor said, adding Friday that investigators sifting through search warrant returns had discovered overnight that the defendant also apparently obtained a Pakistan national identity card in 2019, available to its citizens who live abroad, Rothstein said.</p> <p>However, prosecutors have backed away from what they now call an “unsubstantiated” allegation that Ali had claimed to one witness that he had connections to Pakistan’s intelligence service, the ISI. Pakistan’s embassy released a statement saying Ali has no such connection.</p> <p>“We have never suggested he [Ali] got funds from anybody in Iran, nor ever suggested he got funds from Pakistan,” Rothstein said Friday. “We have not even credited his statement [of ties to ISI]. But we do have to take his statement seriously, if he claimed to an individual he has a connection to a foreign intelligence service.”</p> <p>In court Monday, Michelle Peterson, Taherzadeh’s defense lawyer, said that her client “is all over the Internet” and made a half-joking remark about how little danger he poses.</p> <p>“If there is any Secret Service agent or federal officer that could be fooled into believing he could be a federal agent at this point, we’re in more trouble than that,” she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Judge releases DHS imposters
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/judge-orders-alleged-dhs-impostors-freed-in-secret-service-case-11649801698?mod=hp_listb_pos2
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—A federal judge ordered two men accused of posing as federal agents released from jail while their court cases proceed and sharply questioned the government’s demand to have them detained, saying prosecutors had shown some of their behavior to be “sophomoric” but not a serious threat.</p> <p>“There are significantly worse and more dangerous law-enforcement impersonation cases than what the government has proffered here,” Magistrate Judge G. Michael Harvey said in an hourlong ruling Tuesday from the bench in the last of a series of detention hearings over the course of three days.</p> <p>Prosecutors said the men, Haider Ali and Arian Taherzadeh, posed as Department of Homeland Security employees and gave gifts including rent-free apartments and a drone to Secret Service agents. Prosecutors charged them with impersonating federal officers and argued they were dangerous and would likely flee the country, accusations Judge Harvey said he doubted.</p> <p>The judge said prosecutors had not shown the men acted on behalf of foreign governments or sought to bribe or extort Secret Service agents, and that no national security information had been compromised.</p> <p>The men had been “so spectacularly outed,” he added, that there was no longer a risk they could successfully continue to pose as fake agents.</p> <p>“Nevertheless, I still find that the government has sufficient evidence here to convict both the defendants of the crimes they have been charged with,” Judge Harvey said, agreeing not to release the men until Wednesday morning to give prosecutors time to decide whether to appeal. Under the judge’s order they will be subject to supervision, including GPS monitoring, and must stay away from airports and the apartment in southeastern Washington where they were arrested.</p> <p>Earlier Tuesday, a prosecutor revealed that a Secret Service investigator had tipped off the pair that they were under scrutiny, forcing the Federal Bureau of Investigation to arrest the men before agents were ready.</p> <p>Assistant U.S. Attorney Joshua Rothstein told the judge that Messrs. Ali and Taherzadeh were tipped off on April 4, after the Secret Service placed four of its members on administrative leave and began an</p>

internal probe. As part of that inquiry an investigator reached out to Mr. Taherzadeh via email seeking information.

“He just said that he was a United States Secret Service official and that he was conducting some sort of review. And so that is what then tipped him off,” Mr. Rothstein told the judge. Prosecutors then hurried to seek warrants for their arrests and took them into custody on April 6.

Once the men learned law enforcement was closing in, they tried to conceal guns and other evidence, including by shipping it to a Secret Service agent assigned to the White House “in an attempt to corruptly enlist him in secreting evidence,” prosecutors wrote in court documents.

A Secret Service spokesman declined to comment, citing the pending criminal case.

Mr. Rothstein had argued earlier Tuesday for the pair’s continued detention, while conceding that the government didn’t believe they were part of a foreign intelligence operation, despite Mr. Ali’s alleged mention to a witness that he had ties to Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence agency.

“We have not made grand conspiracy allegations and we do not credit them,” Mr. Rothstein told the judge. He said the government was still investigating whether the two men had destroyed evidence and whether any bribery was involved in their giving gifts to the agents.

Greg Smith, a court-appointed lawyer for Mr. Ali, said his client is a U.S. citizen and had no prospect of getting a passport from Pakistan. He said Pakistan authorities were “quite upset” by allegations of intelligence ties that all parties have now said were “categorically false.”

Mr. Smith said his client hadn’t fled when he learned of the possibility of an arrest and wasn’t a flight risk now, particularly since the government has seized his U.S. passport. He added that the government hadn’t “come close” to establishing grounds to keep Mr. Ali in detention.

Michelle Peterson, the lawyer for Mr. Taherzadeh, likewise said her client had made no attempt to run or hide upon learning that his arrest was imminent, adding there was no evidence of her client asking for or getting any information from the Secret Service agents.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Brooklyn subway attack, shooting; 20+ hurt
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/12/brooklyn-shooting-latest-new-york-sunset-park-subway-attack-news-updates
GIST	<p>A gunman wearing a gas mask filled a crowded New York subway car with thick black smoke from a canister and opened fire on morning rush-hour passengers, injuring more than 20, including 10 with gunshot wounds.</p> <p>A manhunt was under way on Tuesday after the shooter fled the scene. A 9mm semi-automatic handgun and extended magazines, a hatchet, a black garbage can, detonated and undetonated smoke grenades and a key to a U-Haul van were also found at the scene, authorities said. Officers located the vehicle, which will be examined by a bomb squad.</p> <p>Injured passengers suffered from bullet wounds, smoke inhalation and the physical effects of panic. Nobody was reported to be in life-threatening condition.</p> <p>Joe Biden said on Tuesday afternoon: “We’re not letting up until we find the perpetrator.” He thanked professional first responders and civilians who rushed to help their fellow travelers amid the panic.</p> <p>The US president spoke at an event in Iowa, as the New York mayor, Eric Adams, indicated the authorities were getting ready to share the identity of the gunman, who was still at large.</p>

Authorities later identified Frank James, 62, as a person of interest in connection to the shooting. James rented the U-Haul van in Philadelphia and has addresses there and in Wisconsin. As of late Tuesday night, officials had no one in police custody. A \$50,000 reward has been offered for any information in the incident.

On Tuesday morning, graphic photographs and clips posted on social media showed the traumatic scenes on the platform of 36th Street station in the Sunset Park neighbourhood of Brooklyn around 8.30am. Wounded passengers were seen lying as others administered tourniquets to staunch bleeding from their legs.

Another phone image showed blood smeared inside the train carriage and out on to the platform, indicating where a rider had been dragged to safety. Footage captured passengers screaming as they scrambled to escape the shooter.

Biden added that he and the first lady, Jill Biden, were “praying for all those touched by this trauma”.

In a press conference, the New York city police commissioner, Keechant Sewell, described events that began shortly before 8.24am as an N train bound for Manhattan was travelling between the 59th and 36th Street stations.

“An individual on that train donned what appeared to be a gas mask,” Sewell said. “He then took a canister out of his bag and opened it.”

Sewell continued: “The train at that time began to fill with smoke. He then opened fire, striking multiple people on the subway and in the platform.”

The commissioner said there was no known motive for the actions of the suspect. She sought to calm nerves among New Yorkers by saying the shooting was not being investigated as an act of terrorism, but she later said she was “not ruling out anything”.

Agents of the joint terrorism taskforce were at the scene, along with FBI and NYPD officers. Biden and the US attorney general, Merrick Garland, were briefed.

The attack brought fear and chaos to New York City. Witnesses said they had heard so many shots they lost count. Others said the shooting sounded like fireworks or popping, causing confusion among passengers.

Yav Montano, who was inside the carriage as the attack unfolded, shared with CNN a 10-second video he had captured as the train drew into the 36th Street station. People could be heard groaning and coughing and were seen covering their faces against thick smoke.

Montano said a smoke grenade had been let off about two minutes before the train reached the station. Noise erupted and he crouched to the floor in an attempt to shield himself.

“I didn’t realise it was shooting to start with,” Montano said. “It sounded like firecrackers, or a bunch of scattered popping.”

Montano estimated there had been 40 to 50 passengers in the carriage.

“There were some people whose pants were covered with blood,” he said, adding that there was blood on the floor.

“All I saw was people trampling each other, trampling over each other, trying to get into the door, which was locked, and just a lot of panic.”

The passenger said the train had slowed to a halt shortly before it reached the 36th Street station.

“That’s when the chaos happened. Thank goodness the train moved, because I don’t know what would have happened otherwise,” he said.

Other graphic footage was recorded as the N train pulled in. As its doors opened, smoke poured out, followed by passengers, some screaming, others stumbling and falling to the platform. Phone images showed blood on the floor of the car.

Later, there were reports that the gun had been found, a Glock pistol, which had jammed during the incident, amid reports that the investigation was hampered by station security cameras not functioning.

New York has been grappling with high-profile violent incidents on the subway, prompting the relatively new mayor to beef up police patrols.

Adams, who is self-isolating with Covid, said: “We will not allow New Yorkers to be terrorised, even by a single individual.”

Kathy Hochul, the governor of New York, told reporters: “We say: ‘No more.’ No more mass shootings, no more disrupting lives, creating heartbreak for people. We are sick and tired reading headlines about crimes. It has to stop.”

As the manhunt got under way, officers fanned out across the Sunset Park neighbourhood, a largely working-class area with large populations of Hispanic and Chinese descent. Schools were put on lockdown.

New York fire officers said they were looking at up to four undetonated devices, but later confirmed there were no active explosive devices.

At least 21 injured passengers were treated at NYU Langone hospital –Brooklyn, said a facility spokesperson, Lacy Scarmana. As of Tuesday afternoon, 10 had been discharged, with 11 remaining in relatively good condition, Scarmana said.

A statement from New York-Presbyterian hospital said staff there treated three other people injured in the morning’s subway shooting. All were in relatively good medical condition as of Tuesday afternoon, a hospital spokesperson, Tony Chau, said in a statement.

Fire officials said they had taken 17 victims, including those with gunshot wounds, from the scene of the subway attack to local hospitals. Five were reported to be in critical but stable condition. Others arrived at those facilities on their own.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Explosion in road-rage shootings
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/12/us/road-rage-shootings-guns-texas.html
GIST	<p>HOUSTON — The trouble started with an argument between two drivers merging in slow traffic after an Astros baseball game last summer. It ended with two gunshots, fired from a moving Buick and exploding through the glass of a fleeing Ford pickup truck.</p> <p>The bullets missed the truck’s driver, Paul Castro, but one — just one — struck his teenage son, David, who sat in the passenger seat. As Mr. Castro drove to get help, a 911 operator told him to apply pressure to the wound at the back of his son’s head. But David did not make it.</p> <p>The random pointlessness of the killing shocked Houston. But it was one of dozens of similar incidents across the country over the past year amid an explosion of shootings and killings attributed to rage on the road.</p>

These eruptions of sudden violence — a man in Tulsa, Okla., [firing repeatedly](#) after an argument at a red light; a Georgia driver [shot while on a family road trip](#) — are not unique to any part of America, among a population that is increasingly on edge and carrying guns. But they have been perhaps most pronounced on the roads of Texas.

“In the past, people curse one another, throw up the finger and keep moving,” Mayor Sylvester Turner of Houston said in an interview. “Now instead of throwing up the finger, they’re pulling out the gun and shooting.”

As more motorists seemed to be firing guns last year, the Dallas Police Department began tracking road rage shootings for the first time. The results were alarming: 45 people wounded, 11 killed.

In Austin last year, the police recorded 160 episodes of drivers pointing or firing a gun; this year, there have been 15 road rage shootings, with three people struck. (Two others were stabbed in altercations stemming from road rage.)

The prevalence of such violence, not just in Texas but around the country, suggests a cultural commonality, an extreme example of deteriorating behavior that has also flared on airplanes and in stores. It is as if the pandemic and the nation’s sour mood have left people forgetting how to act in public at the same time as [they were buying millions more weapons](#).

“It’s the same sort of ball of wax: People getting frustrated, feeling strained and acting out toward others,” said Charis E. Kubrin, a criminologist at the University of California, Irvine. “One thing that we do know is that there has been a huge rise in gun sales,” she added.

Last month, [a woman driving with her dog](#) shot and wounded another motorist in Oklahoma City. In Miami, a man fired 11 shots from his car on Interstate 95 in [what he has said was self-defense](#). A Los Angeles couple is set to stand trial for firing into a car during morning rush hour last year, [killing a 6-year-old](#) boy on his way to kindergarten.

Criminologists cautioned that any theory of motivation behind road rage shootings is hampered by a lack of data. Most police departments do not keep statistics on road rage episodes, in part because it is not itself a crime category. There is no federal database.

Arizona has tried to get a rough approximation of the number of road rage incidents, adding a box for “possible road rage” to the form filled out by police officers for car crashes in 2018. The data showed an increase in such incidents in 2021 compared with the previous two years, according to Alberto Gutier, the director of the Arizona Governor’s Office of Highway Safety.

“It’s going crazy,” he said of road rage. “People are so stupid.”

But, he added, the state does not track the number of episodes that end up in gunfire.

For its report on an [increase in road rage shootings](#), the gun control group Everytown for Gun Safety relied on the [Gun Violence Archive](#), a nonprofit that compiles data from government sources and media reports. The group found that more than 500 people had been injured or killed in reported road rage shootings last year, up from fewer than 300 in 2019.

“The story that it’s telling is a definite and really worrying increase in incidents of road rage involving a gun,” said Sarah Burd-Sharps, the senior director of research at Everytown for Gun Safety. “Only in this country is someone shot and injured or killed every 17 hours in a road rage incident.”

Texas accounted for a quarter of the fatal shootings last year that were documented in the study, with 33 people killed in road rage shootings in the state, up from 18 in 2019.

Among them was David Castro, the 17-year-old who died in Houston in July. David played percussion in his high school marching band, wanted to study engineering in college and hoped to get his driver's license by the end of the summer.

"I was going over lessons with him as we drove," his father said in an interview, recalling a conversation with David before the shooting as they hit heavy traffic after the Astros game downtown. David's 14-year-old brother was also in the car.

After letting several cars merge into his lane, Mr. Castro began to pull forward in his pickup. That is when a white Buick attempted to edge into the lane, he said. Neither yielded ground; eventually the two cars were touching. There was a "verbal altercation," according to a court record.

A police officer directing traffic told Mr. Castro to let the Buick in. "So I let him in," he said. "David was nervous. But I was like, whatever that was, it's over."

But it wasn't.

On the highway, the Buick started flashing its lights and honking, Mr. Castro said. "I tried to get away and he stayed right behind me," Mr. Castro said. As he took a turnaround lane under a highway, he heard two shots. The rear window shattered. David, seated in the passenger seat, was struck in the back of the head.

"I just started screaming. And he kept chasing us," Mr. Castro said. "This was not a road rage incident — this was a grown man who took the life of a child because his feelings got hurt."

The police eventually made an arrest in the case, charging Gerald Wayne Williams, 35, with murder. Mr. Williams has [since been released on bond](#). "I can't think of anything more tragic," a lawyer for Mr. Williams, Casey Keirnan, said of the killing. But, he said, "my client denies that he is the person who shot him."

The case drew widespread attention in Texas, as did another in Houston involving a 9-year-old girl, Ashanti Grant, who was [shot and seriously wounded](#) in February while riding with her family to a grocery store.

"It is unique to this moment," Mr. Turner said. "I'm a native Houstonian. I'm in my seventh year as mayor. We have just not had it to the point where it has been a noticeable event, except in the last year."

Mr. Turner said that a [string of deadly cases](#) had prompted the city to take steps to reconfigure its traffic cameras to preserve recordings, to eventually help catch roadway shooters.

In Texas, drivers have been allowed to carry firearms without a license in their cars since 2007, a law known as the Texas Motorist Protection Act. A new measure, enacted last year, allows most Texans to carry a handgun in public without a license.

Online, there are videos and trainings that offer tips for carrying and using a gun inside of a car.

Jacob Paulsen, who teaches an online course called "vehicle firearm tactics," said that escaping should always be the driver's aim. "Your primary objective is your own survival," Mr. Paulsen said. "If your primary objective is to punish someone else, or to make sure that other person is in jail or gets justice, those are not good mind-sets."

The guns used in road rage episodes in Dallas are often legally owned, said Detective Christina Smith of the Dallas Police Department, who investigates such shootings. "But having a legal firearm, you still have a responsibility for what you do with that," she added.

The cases pose problems for the police because they almost always occur between strangers, on roadways without cameras. “The few that I have been able to find and actually arrest, it boils down to disrespect,” Detective Smith said. “When you reduce it at its core, the reasons are silly.”

The police in Dallas have been compiling a running report on road rage episodes, with data on the time and place of each reported incident as well as whether it involved a gun. They found that events tend to cluster in the afternoon.

“It seems to be happening around rush hour, in traffic, when people are going home,” said Maj. Mark Villarreal, who is helping lead an effort by the police in Dallas this year to crack down on aggressive driving. “It’s happenstance. It’s a crime of passion.”

That makes each case difficult to solve, said Lt. Kyle Cones of the Houston Police Department. Most escalate from a routine indignity, he said.

“I read every report that comes across, and every actual specific maneuver that they said led to it is they say they got cut off,” the lieutenant said.

That was the case, he said, in the shooting of Ashanti, who was placed in a medically induced coma. “It was a cut-off type deal,” he said.

As gunfire erupted, Lieutenant Cones said, Ashanti’s family members in the car got low. But Ashanti, who was watching a video with headphones on, did not.

Mr. Castro, David’s father, said having a gun in the car only made such tragedies more likely.

“What I want people to do,” he said, “is talk to their husband, talk to their brother, talk to their son, and say, ‘Do you really need a loaded weapon in the cab of your vehicle?’”

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HEADLINE	04/12 Crackdown targets organized crime group
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/12/sports/daniel-kinahan-sanctions-boxing.html
GIST	<p>The U.S. government announced a severe crackdown Tuesday on Daniel Kinahan, the accused head of an Irish organized crime group who has long been involved in boxing, including with one of its biggest stars, Tyson Fury.</p> <p>Bounties of \$5 million were offered for information leading to the arrest and convictions of Kinahan; his father, Christy; and his brother Christy Jr. The U.S. Department of the Treasury also announced financial sanctions against the Kinahans, other members of their group and a number of connected businesses, including a sports management company based in the United Arab Emirates, where U.S. officials say Kinahan now lives.</p> <p>“The Kinahan Organized Crime Group smuggles deadly narcotics, including cocaine, to Europe, and is a threat to the entire licit economy through its role in international money laundering,” Brian Nelson, the under secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence at the Treasury Department, said in a statement.</p> <p>Kinahan has previously been represented by the British law firm Brandsmiths in defamation cases. Adam Morallee, a partner at Brandsmiths, said in an email that he had “reached out for instructions” but had not yet heard from Kinahan. Kinahan’s lawyers in the United States did not respond to an email requesting comment on the sanctions.</p> <p>At a news conference in Dublin, Greg Gatjanis, an associate director of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control, compared the Kinahan group to the Camorra in Italy, the yakuza in Japan and Los Zetas in Mexico.</p>

Outside Ireland, however, Daniel Kinahan, 44, is best known for his deep influence in boxing. In 2012, he founded MTK Global, a boxing and mixed martial arts company that represents top British boxers like Fury, Billy Joe Saunders and Michael Conlan.

MTK Global, which was not subject to sanctions by the U.S. government, said it cut ties with Kinahan after a shooting in 2016 at the Regency Hotel in Dublin at the weigh-in for a planned boxing match between Jamie Kavanagh and Antonio João Bento. According to reports in the Irish news media, Kinahan is believed to have been the target of the shooting, which killed a Kinahan associate.

John O'Driscoll, an assistant commissioner for the Irish national police service, said the shooting was a pivotal moment that led the police to stop thinking of the Kinahans as a "group of criminals located and engaged in crime in Dublin" and start thinking of them as "being a transnational organized crime group possessed of significant wealth."

Even after the 2016 shooting, Kinahan's connections to boxing have endured. In February he posed for a photograph with Fury in Dubai, and last month he posed for a photograph with Mauricio Sulaimán, the president of the World Boxing Council, a sanctioning organization in the sport. Kinahan was also involved in the ultimately failed negotiations to secure a lucrative two-fight deal between Fury and Anthony Joshua.

Athletes and sports officials were urged to cut all ties with the Kinahans by Drew Harris, the head of the national police service in Ireland.

"In terms of some individuals, prominent sporting individuals who are in some way connected with this grouping, I would say you need to look to your sport, to your fans, and think of your own reputation," Harris said.

Harris also warned British broadcasters who have shown fights featuring Fury and other fighters associated with MTK Global to "look at their own business" and consider if they wanted to still be involved with them.

The sanctions against Kinahan and those associated with the Kinahan organized crime group, which authorities said were worth over a billion dollars, seek to cut them off from much of the world's financial system. All of their property and money in the United States is blocked, and American citizens, as well as anybody else on U.S. soil, are almost entirely prohibited from engaging in transactions with them.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Neighbors: F. James quiet, gruff
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/12/nyregion/brooklyn-subway-shooting#frank-james-was-quiet-and-gruff-his-neighbors-in-milwaukee-said
GIST	<p>A neighbor of Frank R. James, whom the New York Police Department has called a person of interest in Tuesday's mass shooting on a subway train in Brooklyn, said in an interview that Mr. James was gruff and standoffish, and once confronted her over a key left in her apartment door.</p> <p>The neighbor, Keilah Miller, said she had not seen Mr. James since late March — a timeline that aligns with Mr. James's description of his recent travels, posted in a YouTube video last month.</p> <p>Ms. Miller, 32, said that she lived in an adjacent unit to Mr. James, 62, and that he had moved into the two-story triplex in Milwaukee within the past year.</p> <p>Ms. Miller said she had heard him yelling on the phone several times, including a conversation in which he complained about ignorant people. After she mistakenly left her key in her lock, they had an altercation in which she recalled him yelling, "Don't ever do that again!"</p> <p>He walked down the street almost every morning, she said, but never said hello.</p>

“Like if I say, ‘Hello, good morning,’ he just grunts at me like he’s some old grumpy Black man,” said Ms. Miller, who is Black.

“He is a really weird neighbor,” she added.

A friend who mistakenly went inside Mr. James’s apartment at one point, she said, described it as “dirty and messy.” Ms. Miller said she had never seen anybody else with him.

When Ms. Miller returned home on Tuesday evening, there was a television station outside the chain-link fence surrounding her building, but no noticeable law enforcement presence.

“They should probably go in there and sweep it with the police because this is terrifying now,” she said. “I’m a little scared and worried.”

One former neighbor from an apartment in Milwaukee that Mr. James previously lived in said Mr. James was quiet and walked with a limp, and that it was a surprise he would be connected with the shooting.

The neighbor, Mike Lopez, 38, said he never spoke to Mr. James but often saw him pushing a small cart with groceries or other possessions.

“I didn’t see him as no threat or nothing,” Mr. Lopez said. “I mean, I don’t see him as capable as that. He can’t move like that, man. He wasn’t fast.”

The police have not said whether they believe that Mr. James was the gunman, and did not call him a suspect. But the key to a U-Haul van he had rented was found among the gunman’s belongings at the scene of the shooting, the police said.

In a video posted on YouTube, Mr. James described his plan to pack up his apartment in Milwaukee and drive a rented U-Haul to Philadelphia, where he said he had rented a place to stay.

In the video, he describes his concern about returning to Philadelphia, which he refers to as “the danger zone.”

“On the drive I’m just thinking because I’m heading back into the danger zone, so to speak, and it’s triggering a lot of negative thoughts,” he said, “because I do suffer from — have a bad case of post-traumatic stress from all the things I’ve been through.”

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HEADLINE	04/12 Obstacle: problems NY subway cameras
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/12/nyregion/brooklyn-subway-shooting#problems-with-new-yorks-subway-cameras-date-back-years
GIST	<p>The lack of security camera footage from the 36th Street subway station has become a significant obstacle in efforts to detain the gunman in Tuesday’s attack, putting the Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s surveillance system under renewed scrutiny.</p> <p>Mayor Eric Adams said a “malfunction” was the reason that at least one camera at the station failed to capture anything. M.T.A. officials claimed on Tuesday that no more than 1 percent of the subway system’s cameras are out of service at any given time.</p> <p>One senior law enforcement official said that it appeared none of the station’s cameras were in full operation at the time of the shooting on Tuesday. It is unclear exactly how many cameras were at the station. The official requested anonymity because it is an ongoing case.</p> <p>Cameras are checked “regularly,” Tim Minton, an M.T.A. spokesman, said. He could not say how often. When the agency announced in September that it had finished installing security cameras in every one of</p>

the city's 472 subway stations, officials touted them as a safety benefit. The M.T.A. has nearly 10,000 cameras in its system, Janno Lieber, chief executive officer of the agency, said.

But problems with the cameras date back years. In 2010, M.T.A. officials said [nearly half](#) of the system's cameras at the time did not work, either because of software or construction problems.

And in 2018, an audit by the [state comptroller's office](#) found routine problems with camera maintenance in the subway system. For instance, auditors reviewed all 223 cameras at 10 subway stations between January 2014 through September 2016 and found that about 31 percent of 4,219 planned checks weren't done.

The audit also found that 26 percent of 9,223 calls to the M.T.A.'s Electronic Maintenance Division for problems with cameras and recording devices during the same period took longer than a three-day target to be addressed.

A [follow-up report](#) in 2019 concluded that the agency had "made progress" by following some of the audit's recommendations.

"If you are a criminal who preys on those who use our system, you will have your image captured and be put on the express track to justice," the agency's chief safety and security officer, Patrick Warren, said in September.

Surveillance of New Yorkers has drawn criticism from civil liberties advocates who have said that security cameras do not necessarily [prevent crime](#). They have also criticized the N.Y.P.D.'s use of them to [monitor homeless people](#) at subway stations and warned against [potentially discriminatory use](#) of their footage.

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HEADLINE	04/12 Trail of clues, online rants, rented van
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/12/nyregion/brooklyn-subway-shooting#a-trail-of-clues-in-online-rants-a-rented-van-and-a-fireworks-purchase
GIST	<p>The New York Police Department fanned across the five boroughs early Wednesday searching for clues and offered a \$50,000 reward for information that leads to the arrest of the gunman who fired 33 shots on a rush-hour subway train in Brooklyn.</p> <p>New York police officials and their federal counterparts asked specifically that people share cellphone video from the shooting site or elsewhere that might help bring the manhunt to a swift conclusion. Police have identified a person of interest and said the reward could go to those who help find him.</p> <p>"Everyone's got a cellphone in their pocket," Michael J. Driscoll, the assistant director in charge of the F.B.I.'s New York office, said at a Tuesday evening news conference. "There's a lot of video out there."</p> <p>The initial subject of the search was Frank R. James, the 62-year-old man identified as a person of interest in the case, with investigators focusing their immediate attention on addresses in Milwaukee and Philadelphia where he had recently lived.</p> <p>Mr. James's ties to Philadelphia, the police said, included his recent rental there of a van that he drove to an area of Brooklyn near the subway line where the shooting occurred and abandoned.</p> <p>The police said they had found a key to the van among various other items — a Glock 9-millimeter handgun, three ammunition magazines, a hatchet, fireworks and a liquid believed to be gasoline — that they believed the gunman had left on the train. The van was found on a Brooklyn street several hours after the shooting.</p> <p>"We are endeavoring to locate him to determine his connection to the subway shooting, if any," James Essig, New York City's chief of detectives, said of Mr. James while speaking at the news conference.</p>

Return to Top	<p>“We are asking for anyone’s help with information,” he added, while announcing the reward.</p> <p>The fireworks found on the subway — a photograph of which circulated on social media Tuesday — appeared to open another investigative trail leading to Mr. James. According to a fireworks seller in Racine, Wis., a man named Frank James bought several similar brands of consumer-grade fireworks there last June.</p> <p>In addition to physical and video evidence, investigators were also delving into Mr. James’s activity online, where he posted dozens of videos in recent years, many of them angry diatribes peppered with bigotry.</p> <p>In his call for the public’s help, Mr. Driscoll of the F.B.I. urged people to contact the agency about any online material they believed to be relevant.</p> <p>“If you have digital information that you’d like to share with us in connection with this investigation, please visit fbi.gov,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 F. James posted troubling videos online
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/12/nyregion/brooklyn-subway-shooting#frank-james-brooklyn-shooting
GIST	<p>The man whom the police have identified as a person of interest in the subway attack in Brooklyn appears to have posted dozens of videos on social media in recent years — lengthy rants in which he expressed a range of harshly bigoted views and, more recently, criticized the policies of New York City’s mayor, Eric Adams.</p> <p>The man, Frank R. James, 62, has addresses in Wisconsin and Philadelphia, the police said. He is the subject of a search effort as investigators seek to determine any connection he may have had to the shooting at a Brooklyn subway station on Tuesday morning.</p> <p>He was not named as a suspect, and the police identify someone as a person of interest when they believe the individual may have information related to a crime. But New York’s police commissioner, Keechant Sewell, said that citizens should call with any information they had on Mr. James.</p> <p>Two law enforcement officials said that a credit card with Mr. James’s name on it had been found at the scene of the shooting, as had a key to a van that Mr. James had rented. It appeared that Mr. James had rented the van in Philadelphia sometime over the last several days, driven it close to the subway line where the attack occurred and abandoned it there, one official said. The van was found by the police in the late afternoon on Tuesday.</p> <p>Separately, the authorities offered up to \$50,000 in reward money for information leading to the arrest and indictment of a suspect in the attack.</p> <p>The police released a screenshot of Mr. James taken from a YouTube video posted by a channel belonging to the username prophetoftruth88.</p> <p>The videos featured a man — who appeared to be the same man in a picture released by the police — delivering extended tirades, many of them overtly concerned with race and violence, often tying those subjects in with current events, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the policies of Mr. Adams. Two law enforcement officials said that Mr. James was the person featured in the channel’s videos.</p> <p>In a video posted to YouTube on March 1, the person featured in the video criticized Mayor Eric Adams by name for recently announced policies addressing public safety in the subways, which focused on homeless people.</p>

	<p>Ms. Sewell said at the news conference Tuesday that Mr. Adams's security detail would be increased in light of the videos.</p> <p>Another video on the channel, posted in 2020, appeared to have been taken in New York's subways. In that video, the person holding the camera simply trains it on a crowded subway car.</p> <p>Officials said that consumer-grade fireworks, gasoline and two unused smoke grenades had been recovered from the scene of a shooting, and a photograph circulated on social media on Tuesday appeared to show the fireworks, along with other material.</p> <p>William Weimer, a vice president at Phantom Fireworks, said that a man named Frank James from Milwaukee, Wis., had purchased several brands of the fireworks seen in the photo from the Phantom Fireworks' showroom outside of Racine, Wis., in June 2021.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Police 'person of interest' mass shooting
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/12/nyregion/brooklyn-subway-shooting#brooklyn-subway-shooting
GIST	<p>The police in New York on Tuesday evening identified a man they called a "person of interest" in the mass shooting on a crowded subway train in Brooklyn during the morning rush earlier that day that injured nearly two dozen people, five of them critically.</p> <p>The man, Frank R. James, 62, had rented a U-Haul van in Philadelphia, the police said. A key to the van, they said, was found in a collection of belongings on the train that they believed belonged to the gunman, including a Glock 9-millimeter handgun, three ammunition magazines, a hatchet, fireworks and a liquid believed to be gasoline.</p> <p>The police found the van abandoned on a street late Tuesday afternoon, about five blocks from the Kings Highway station, where they say the gunman had gotten on the subway, and five miles from the 36th Street station, where the shooting unfolded.</p> <p>Mr. James remains at large, James Essig, the Police Department's chief of detectives, said in a news conference at police headquarters.</p> <p>"We are endeavoring to locate him to determine his connection to the subway shooting, if any," Chief Essig said.</p> <p>Mr. James has addresses in Philadelphia and Wisconsin, the police said.</p> <p>He appeared to have posted dozens of videos on YouTube, where he ruffed off news events in long, vitriolic rants. He blamed Black women for violence among Black people and pointed to Russia's invasion of Ukraine as evidence that whites are genocidal.</p> <p>Shortly before 8:30 a.m., the police said, a heavysset, dark-skinned man in a construction vest and construction helmet donned a gas mask as a crowded N train approached the 36th Street station in the Sunset Park neighborhood, tossed two smoke grenades on the floor of the car, and began firing the gun. Thirty-three shots later, he fled.</p> <p>Ten people were hit by gunfire, the police said. Five of the victims were critically injured, but none of their wounds were life-threatening, the Fire Department said. The 10 gunshot victims made the shooting the worst in the history of the New York City subway. Another 13 people suffered injuries related to smoke inhalation, falls or panic attacks, Chief Essig said.</p> <p>The shooting came as the city was already struggling to cope with both a rise in shootings citywide and an increase in crime and disorder in the subway that has scared commuters from returning to a transit system that saw ridership plummet during the pandemic. It set off panic and chaos aboard the train, in the station and the surrounding streets and sent schools in the vicinity into lockdowns that lasted much of the day.</p>

	<p>Mayor Eric Adams said that the search for the gunman was hampered by the fact that at least one security camera at the 36th Street subway station that might have captured the scene was not operating.</p> <p>The N train snakes through working-class neighborhoods filled with immigrants from all over Asia and Latin America. As the shooting unfolded and the doors of the train opened, sending smoke billowing through 36th Street station, fearful riders fled, many of them hurrying onto an R train sitting across the platform. Subway seats and cars were streaked with blood as people called for help.</p> <p>Around the 36th Street station, dozens of police vehicles with flashing lights clogged the streets and helicopters flew overhead.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Tacoma budget hotels hot spot for crime
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/map-data-shows-cluster-of-budget-hotels-have-become-hotspot-for-violence-crime-in-tacoma
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. - The cluster of budget hotels in South Tacoma near where a woman was gunned down early Tuesday morning has become an outsized crime magnet for the city, according to data reviewed by FOX 13 News.</p> <p>South Hosmer Street where the hotels are located, between 84th and 90th, has been the scene of 1,355 crime incidents as mapped by the City of Tacoma between 2014 and December 2021. While the tool only shows 10 data points along the approximately half-mile stretch of road, each spot is linked to dozens – if not hundreds – of police reports. For example, the data point near the old Dickey's Barbecue Pit location links to 150 separate incidents.</p> <p>Taken as a whole, the records reflect a staggering variety of alleged crimes at these locations: kidnappings, sex trafficking, drug dealing, illegal gun sales, robbery, shootings, fraud, assaults and murder, that have been shown in numerous media reports over the years. By comparison, crime numbers drop more than 90% when you look just one block over. During the same 7-year period, the same portion of South Alaska (including side streets) had just 120 incidents according to this data. Walking a little farther east, while South Ainsworth wasn't crime free there were still only 95 incidents on the map.</p> <p>Law enforcement experts point to two features that make South Hosmer Street a convenient place to do crime: easy access from Interstate 5 and a choice of seven different motels, inns, and travel lodges. The City of Tacoma already recognizes that hotels and motels can become problem spots for illegal behavior if poorly run but Arizona State University's Center for Problem Oriented Policing has collected several studies on Disorder at Budget Motels in particular. These include a review of 'Taking Back our Boulevard', an enforcement operation carried out by the Tukwila Police Department targeting a handful of nuisance hotels that resulted in a dramatic drop in local crime.</p> <p>Like the concentration of law-breaking along South Hosmer, an analysis of police reports in Tukwila from 2008-2012 "showed an elevated number of incidents occurred along a 1.5 mile section of Tukwila International Boulevard (TIB)" near nine motels. According to the report, "Several of these motels were suspected of being safe havens for persons engaged in prostitution, drug dealing, and the violent crimes associated with those activities." Three of the nine motels in particular, all along the same block, were among the "top five problem locations."</p> <p>A year-long investigation by local and federal officers showed that "the three motels - all owned by members of the same family - were used by the owners to facilitate and profit from criminal activity. The investigation resulted in the arrests of the owners and the federal seizure of the motels One year after the motels were shuttered, data showed a 12% drop in violent crime city-wide and a 40% drop in violent crime along the TIB corridor."</p>

Other Washington cities have shuttered problem hotels, by declaring them nuisance properties – [including Seattle](#) and [most recently Pasco](#). Victoria Woodards, mayor of Tacoma, addressed questions if the city should consider the same plan on South Hosmer Street.

"So, it's not something that's on our docket right now. Doesn't mean that we wouldn't consider, but what we currently use is our nuisance code. And through our nuisance code and code enforcement, we have gone in and made changes. In some cases shut motels down for a period of time," said Woodards.

South Hosmer Street is in District Five, led by city council member Joe Bushnell for the past four months. He said cleaning up Hosmer isn't a quick fix, but rather long term investments to revitalize it.

"I think of Hosmer as a district, like it's own business district, but traditionally in the past it hasn't been thought as so. And so, I'm really trying to orient community to the problems that are happening down there citywide, and we can organize the community, develop a plan and really execute that plan to bring in those investments and really turn the neighborhood around," said Bushnell.

"This is truly a low opportunity area. So, we need to make more investments in that particular area. But the problem is, do you get the investments before you solve the crime? Or do you solve the crime and then you get the investments?" said Woodards.

City leaders said they look forward to hearing Tacoma Police Chief Avery Moore's crime update report--taking a closer look at hot spots in Tacoma, including South Hosmer Street. The chief is scheduled to give the report on April 19 during the city council meeting.

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HEADLINE	04/12 SPD: 24 ghost guns this year, 3 last year
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/spd-24-ghost-guns-recovered-so-far-this-year-compared-to-just-3-during-same-period-last-year
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The Seattle Police Department recovered 161 firearms in March, according to Chief Adrian Diaz, which he said is the third-highest number of guns officers have recovered in the last decade.</p> <p>Diaz said during Tuesday's Public Safety Committee meeting with Seattle City Council members that an increasing number of those guns are turning out to be ghost guns. Ghost guns are usually made from individual parts, kits or by a 3D printer.</p> <p>So far this year, 24 of the guns recovered are untraceable ghost guns, according to Diaz. He said this same time last year, officers had only recovered three of these types of privately made guns.</p> <p>"What we're seeing is just an immense amount of guns that are on the streets," said Diaz. "We are seeing an increased amount of ghost guns that are affecting and being used in our communities."</p> <p>This week, President Joe Biden announced a new federal rule for ghost guns, which would require unfinished parts of a firearm to be licensed and serialized, and manufacturers would be required to run background checks.</p> <p>The Alliance for Gun Responsibility in Washington State said it builds on the progress that's been made in our state. This past legislative session, state lawmakers passed a law on ghost guns that goes into effect this summer.</p> <p>"It prohibits the manufacture, assembly, sale and transfer of untraceable undetectable ghost guns," said Kristen Ellingboe, communications manager for the Alliance for Gun Responsibility. "Ghost guns are untraceable firearms that make it really easy for anyone, including people who are prohibited from owning a firearm, even children, from buying these weapons and assembling them at home."</p>

	<p>Ellingboe said the state law would also establish standards requiring markings on these kinds of firearms.</p> <p>Dave Workman of GunMag.com and Liberty Park Press believes these latest rounds of regulation won't solve the historic increase in violent crimes impacting communities.</p> <p>"You're not focusing on the right thing, which is the bad guy committing the crime. It demonizes a firearm, which really is an inanimate object," said Workman. "You want to prosecute the person, not the firearm, and that's where I think this plan is going to fall short."</p> <p>The Justice Department said nationally, 24,000 ghost guns were recovered by law enforcement between 2016 and 2020, but it's hard to actually know how many of these guns are circulating because they are untraceable.</p> <p>The Seattle Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives said the number of privately made guns recovered in the last few years has increased, but not exponentially.</p> <p>Workman said the Second Amendment Foundation and other gun rights organizations are expected to legally challenge Biden's federal rule on ghost guns.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Spokane police investigate deadly shooting
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/spokane-north-central-shooting-crash/293-95ab3cb4-a8bc-4345-b4c7-d7d09df65802
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Spokane Police are investigating after a man was shot and killed in North Central Spokane.</p> <p>Around 1:30 a.m. on Tuesday, police received multiple calls about gunshots heard in the area of West Maxwell Avenue and North Lincoln Street. While officers were responding, another caller reported a car crash in the area of North Wall Street and West Augusta Avenue, which is about two blocks away. The caller reported a man in the street and not moving.</p> <p>When officers arrived, they found the man on the ground with an apparent gunshot wound. Despite life-saving measures, the man died at the scene.</p> <p>Police were on the scene of the shooting and crash for several hours Tuesday morning as part of their investigation.</p> <p>Investigators have not released any details about a possible suspect. Police are asking any witnesses to call CrimeCheck at (509) 456-2233 and reference case number 2022-20060539.</p> <p>The shooting on Tuesday morning follows a weekend of violence in Spokane that included two unrelated shootings in less than an hour.</p> <p>In one of the shootings, police say a man shot three people outside a downtown Spokane bar in a drive-by shooting. Two of the people shot are not expected to survive. The suspect, 29-year-old Johnathan R. Love appeared in court on Monday afternoon and entered a not guilty plea to several charges.</p> <p>In the other shooting, a man was shot in the 2900 block of East Queen. He was taken to the hospital in serious but stable condition. Police arrested a suspect shortly after the shooting.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Spokane drive-by shootings task force
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/spokane-mayor-task-force-recent-shootings/293-92d8c8d0-3b28-4cf5-9121-211e4f8e8d9b

GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Spokane Mayor Nadine Woodward is taking steps to form a task force in response to the recent shootings in the city.</p> <p>She believes pent up frustration and anxiety during the pandemic is causing some people to turn to violence.</p> <p>That's why she created a mental health task force last month. But now, she wants to create a task force that addresses the recent uptick in drive-by shootings in Spokane.</p> <p>Woodward said shootings are increasing not just in Spokane, but across the country.</p> <p>She asked the question, "what is Spokane going to do to prevent these crimes?" Her answer--a task force focused on taking a proactive approach to addressing these violent crimes. She is currently discussing the task force with Spokane Police Chief Craig Meidl.</p> <p>"We are in the process right now of forming that task force and deciding who should be at the table, what it looks like and what we're going to focus on," Woodward said. "And if we can get to the preventative part of this crime, then I think that would be that would be the goal."</p> <p>She understands the Spokane community is frustrated with the recent drive-by shootings and shares their concern.</p> <p>"It's a multi layered situation," she said. "The police are doing their job. They're making the arrests or solving the crimes. But when it goes to the courts, the courts need to do their job as well."</p> <p>But she also encourages the community to help police in their efforts to take a stand against these violent crimes.</p> <p>"We also need more eyes on the streets, more eyes in the community, reporting what they're seeing, reporting what they have witnessed," Woodward said.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the Spokane Police Department said it does not expect an increased officer presence in downtown Spokane this weekend. Right now, SPD is evaluating those needs.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Tacoma street racing spectator penalties?
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/street-racing-spectator-crackdown-advances-in-tacoma
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — Tacoma is on track to tighten up the penalties around street racing.</p> <p>City leaders took a step Tuesday night to expand the current ban to include spectators, although it came with some modifications when concerns were raised that the punishment could be too harsh.</p> <p>The initial proposal made watching a street race punishable by as much as a \$1,000 fine and up to 90 days in jail. Acting on a motion by Councilmember Keith Blocker, they voted to reduce the proposed penalty down to 30 days.</p> <p>There have been nights when street races and sideshows have taken over entire neighborhoods in Tacoma. The drivers are already breaking the law. If the council moves forward to close a loophole, soon the crowds that show up to watch could get in trouble too.</p> <p>"I think it's a little bit of encouragement (to watch)," said Stephanie Elder, who lives in Tacoma. "They're supporting something that can be dangerous."</p> <p>Last month, Tacoma police released this video last month where spectators taunted officers. One man blocked a patrol car by doing push-ups in front of it.</p>

	<p>“So when you're doing push-ups and sit-ups, you may think you're winning today,” said Tacoma Police Chief Avery Moore, “but believe me, it may be tomorrow. it may be the next day, but we're going to come get you.”</p> <p>Councilmembers have signaled support for the spectator ordinance, although Blocker considered the potential for 90 days in jail to be extreme.</p> <p>“Putting people in jail, behind bars, just doesn't sit well but I understand this is a serious problem in the city of Tacoma,” Blocker said.</p> <p>The council set over the street racing spectator ordinance for next week when it is expected to get a final reading and vote.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Companies turn to de-escalation training
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/business/some-seattle-firms-bolstering-training-for-workers-to-help-diffuse-volatile-situations
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — De-escalation training seems to be the new norm for many retailers and restaurants in Seattle as some of them turn to the approach, insisting that it has resulted from an uptick in crime and public safety concerns in the city.</p> <p>Images from security cameras help to tell the story unfolding in various businesses, including pot shops and jewelry stores.</p> <p>Captured on camera recently was a break-in at a newly opened jewelry store in Ballard when the suspect broke the window and surprised the sleeping store owner inside.</p> <p>Another camera documented a suspect trying to make his way out of a Target store in downtown Seattle while pushing a massive flat screen TV that store employees said had not been paid for.</p> <p>And most recently, Bellevue Rare Coins in West Seattle released images officials said showed an armed robbery in progress.</p> <p>The images captured three masked marauders, one with a gun and the other holding a hammer.</p> <p>The property crime have extended to restaurants, which have experienced broken storefronts and break-ins, too.</p> <p>“We receive a report of a broken window or break-in every other week across our restaurant portfolio,” said Steve Hooper Jr., president of both Seattle Restaurant Alliance and Ethan Stowell Restaurants, which has 25 eateries.</p> <p>In some cases, the group's restaurants have been broken into a dozen times or more in the last two years. “That's new,” he said. “That didn't exist pre-pandemic!”</p> <p>Not just this restaurant group, but plenty of other Seattle businesses are embracing a new line of defense: stepping up de-escalation and employee safety training.</p> <p>“We are working on de-escalation training for our teams and staff to help them deal with folks coming in and disrupting service, which happens a lot,” Hooper said.</p> <p>The Downtown Seattle Association has heard those reports as well.</p> <p>The group's website describes it as a "non-profit membership organization whose mission is to create a healthy vibrant downtown for all."</p>

“There is just a lot of uncertainty and a lot of businesses they definitely want to know that their employees are comfortable and feel safe,” said Brian Cannon, director of Safety and Outreach for the downtown group, which provides classes to teach businesses and their workers how to de-escalate.

Over the past eight months, the group's team of safety prevention staff has gone from teaching on average about one class a month to up to 12 classes currently.

The program is available to anyone in the Metropolitan Improvement District, including businesses, organizations and groups of residents. It includes six downtown neighborhoods that span roughly 200 core blocks in downtowns.

Cannon said their latest class was for a Seattle gallery where police say a suspect who implied he had weapon took off with a valuable mammoth tusk from the gallery last week.

“They really appreciated the support and having new some new tools,” he said.

The training classes are offered in partnership with the Seattle Police Department and its West Precinct.

Cannon says the training begins with learning about situational awareness and includes situations where students can study how to recognize behaviors and engage when appropriate.

“It’s that situation where someone is behaving in a way in that may be in crisis or aggressive,” Cannon said. “Often it can be someone with a set of needs not met. A lot of the class is to teach to recognize the state someone is in, what their needs might be. Sometimes it is how to have a conversation, how to walk up (and) talk to them in a way to acknowledge them and help them.”

De-escalation training is not the only consequence born out of the uptick in crime.

In addition to training employees, hiring security, installing surveillance cameras and further fortifying their properties, many business, especially restaurants, are still struggling to hire new workers.

Hooper said the big hurdle is crime and public safety.

“Everyone is struggling to hire right now,” he said. “That is a restaurant hard fact. It's even harder to do downtown.”

He acknowledge the city is making progress, citing working with Seattle City Council members to set up community meetings and block watch programs. But he described that progress as “slow” and pointed to what he believes is one major hurdle and glaring priority.

“We need to work on the brand of Seattle,” Hooper said. “Right now the brand is Seattle doesn't like police and would rather leave homeless right where they are.”

Despite safety concerns, more people are returning to Seattle’s downtown, including workers, which could serve as a potential deterrent for some crime.

A new DSA report cites a record high’ 98,000 residents who now call downtown home.

The data is part of the non-profit's annual [State of Downtown Economic Report](#), which was recently released.

The group also tracked 170 new street-level businesses that opened in the last 12 months in downtown, including nearly 70 restaurants.

HEADLINE	04/12 Tacoma police investigate shooting death
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/south-sound-news/i-shouldnt-have-be-used-this-tacoma-police-investigate-homicide-south-hosmer-street/ME2UQVOEUNGFTC5753OD3BCH5Q/
GIST	<p>Tacoma detectives are investigating a homicide on South Hosmer Street, where a <u>25-year-old woman was found unresponsive</u> in the parking lot of the Hometowne Studios motel.</p> <p>“We had repeated calls that someone had been shot in the 8800 block of South Hosmer Street,” Wendy Haddow, a public information officer with the Tacoma Police Department, said. The woman was transported to a nearby hospital, where she died of her injuries.</p> <p>Haddow also said Tacoma Police are conducting “high-visibility patrols” in the surrounding area of South Hosmer Street.</p> <p>“Statistical analysis has shown that we’ve seen an increase in violent crimes in that area,” she said.</p> <p>Tuesday marked the fourth homicide investigation conducted by Tacoma PD on South Hosmer Street since late January.</p> <p>On Jan. 25, a <u>29-year-old man was shot and killed</u> on the 8700 block of South Hosmer Street. On Feb. 7, a <u>40-year-old man was shot and killed</u> on the 8800 block of South Hosmer Street. On Feb. 28, a <u>31-year-old woman was shot and killed</u> on the 8400 block of South Hosmer Street.</p> <p>Tacoma detectives concluded the suspect drove her body to the 4900 block of South Burlington Way and abandoned the car.</p> <p>Donald Lett said he’s “seen so much chaos” while he’s lived at the HomeTowne Studios, where Tuesday’s homicide took place. He said he wears a bulletproof vest around the clock.</p> <p>“Even when I’m in my room, I sleep in it,” Lett said. “Because I might open my door, I might get up - anything could happen.”</p> <p>Fresnel Williams also stays at an extended-stay motel. He said he helps with maintenance and security on the property.</p> <p>“It’s nothing new. Hosmer is popular for people getting hurt and people dying. I shouldn’t have to be used to it, but I grew up here,” Williams said. “I don’t even let my kids outside. No person, no parent, no elderly (people) should have to feel that fear. They should be able to walk outside and feel safe, but they don’t.”</p> <p>Williams and Lett said many of their neighbors have lost hope. Lett said he buys extra food and snacks to help feed his neighbors.</p> <p>“The worst thing is, it’s terrible out here for the women. It’s 20 times harder. It’s not safe at all,” Lett said. “I grew up in chaos, so I’m used to this type of environment. I feel like I want to fight for the greater good. No one else is doing it. The cops can’t do it, so what do we have to do? The community has to take care of the community.”</p> <p>Williams said South Hosmer Street needs more police presence, especially for longer durations.</p> <p>“I have to kick the same people off the property. Then you get the same people driving in and out. A lot of people here feel very unsafe,” Williams said. “(Officers) leave, they come back. They watch you daily. They know when you come, they know when you don’t.”</p> <p>There is no information about possible suspects available for Tuesday’s homicide, according to Tacoma PD. If you have any information that can help, you can leave an anonymous tip at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Prison guard kept job despite violations
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/investigations/clallam-county-prison-guard-repeated-misconduct/281-a1c463a5-9d3d-4ae4-8cb1-d811ce42eaa9
GIST	<p>CLALLAM BAY, Wash. — Morgan Lee was sexually assaulted by the man who was paid to protect her.</p> <p>And even though she said she never wanted to see her abuser — a Forks jail guard — again, she tuned in to his virtual sentencing hearing early last year to watch as a Clallam County judge sentenced him to spend 20 months behind bars.</p> <p>“He looked defeated and powerless, which is exactly how I felt,” said Lee, 38, of Shelton. “I wanted him to know that it was not right what he did to me and to anybody else.”</p> <p>John Russell Gray, the corrections officer who pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting Lee and three other women while they were inmates at the Forks Correctional Facility in 2019, had a thick disciplinary record and at least two dozen complaints against him over his 24-year career as a corrections officer.</p> <p>Yet, officials at nearly every level — from the city of Forks to the state Department of Corrections (DOC) and Gray’s local corrections union — repeatedly made decisions that allowed the predator to remain on the job as a guard, with power over a vulnerable population, a three-month KING 5 investigation found.</p> <p>Reporters scoured thousands of pages of disciplinary records, city and state documents, law enforcement records, and internal emails between Gray’s union representative and prison staff. The documents were obtained from public disclosure requests or provided to KING 5 by an attorney representing the family of a fifth alleged victim in a federal lawsuit against the city of Forks.</p> <p>Before Gray’s short stint as a Forks jail guard in 2019, he worked for more than two decades as a corrections officer at the Clallam Bay Corrections Center, an adult male prison located about 30 miles north of the city of Forks. As a guard there, he faced repeated discipline — from letters of reprimand to suspensions — for misconduct that included racism toward coworkers, vulgarity toward offenders, security breaches and sexual harassment. Gray, 53, was fired from his prison job at one point only to later be reinstated, according to DOC records.</p> <p>“He acted like he was bulletproof — like nothing he said or did would get him in trouble,” said Kimberly Seward, Gray’s former co-worker. “And he was pretty much right.”</p> <p>The officer’s misconduct in his prison job shouldn’t have been a secret to the Forks leaders who offered him work at the small city jail. Gray consented to a complete background check after applying for the Forks job. Forks Police Chief Mike Rowley personally reviewed Gray’s DOC file four weeks before he hired him, according to a record of the people who accessed Gray’s prison file.</p> <p>And even after the city of Forks fired Gray eight months into his job at the jail, his career as a corrections officer wasn’t over. Within five months, the state brought him back on as a full-time guard at the Clallam Bay prison and — state records note — he got a raise.</p> <p>The DOC, the city of Forks and an attorney for John Gray declined KING 5’s requests for interviews. No one from the city of Forks responded to questions.</p> <p>A DOC spokesperson said the agency followed its protocol throughout the course of Gray’s prison employment, and prison officials were not immediately clued in to his misconduct in Forks.</p> <p>A PATTERN OF COMPLAINTS</p> <p>Kimberly Seward, a former corrections officer at the Clallam Bay Corrections Center, said she used to call in to work sick just to avoid spending time around Gray.</p>

"I physically couldn't get out of bed because I knew this person was there – that Gray was going to be there. The thought of that was exhausting and hopeless," said Seward, who worked with the guard for five years between 2013 and 2018. "It was extremely uncomfortable. I'd say, toxic."

State records show Seward repeatedly voiced her concerns about the officer to prison bosses. In written complaints, she reported Gray "harassed" her and subjected her to a "hostile work environment" by yelling and consistently making bigoted, sexual and homophobic comments while on the job.

And she wasn't the only staff member who spoke up. Between 2014 and 2018, at least seven other Clallam Bay Corrections Center employees filed written complaints about Gray's behavior at work, according to a review of his DOC file.

"I do not feel safe working with Gray, and I worry for the unit staff," one female corrections officer wrote in an email to her supervisor. "I feel something bad is going to happen."

Offenders at the male prison complained, too – including at least five prisoners who reported Gray for sexual misconduct. In April 2015, a transgender man filed a complaint alleging that Gray not only sexually harassed him but targeted other inmates as well.

"I'm afraid that the local here is trying to cover up sexual misconduct of (Corrections Officer) John Gray, who tends to sexually harass and make sexual comments towards inmates and has been doing that quite a bit," the man told prison officials, before eventually requesting that DOC officials separate him from the guard.

DOC officials investigated the sexual misconduct complaints from all five offenders and closed them without action, noting in disciplinary records that they couldn't prove the prisoners' claims.

But some complaints from Gray's coworkers would eventually lead to disciplinary action.

DISCIPLINE ESCALATES

In January 2017, after Seward and two other employees filed complaints, Gray received a written letter of reprimand for "inappropriate, disrespectful and racially slanderous" comments about a Native American co-worker and an Asian supervisor.

"I was hoping that any sort of positive change that could happen would happen," Seward said. "But unfortunately, that was not the case."

A year and a half later in July 2018, the DOC suspended Gray for 15 days without pay for a string of other policy violations. Prison officials said he showed "inappropriate, disrespectful and unprofessional" behavior toward offenders and staff, shoved an inmate during an improper search and violated security protocol when he left two prison gates unlocked at once.

"He couldn't do the basic necessities to treat people with dignity," Seward said. "At that point, why are you keeping a problem employee?"

Three months after Gray's suspension, the Clallam Bay prison superintendent concluded he was "no longer qualified" to serve as a DOC corrections officer, according to a disciplinary letter in his prison personnel file. Her comments came after prison investigators said Gray made "sexually-oriented comments and sounds" at a mandatory workplace training session intended to stop prison sexual misconduct.

Disciplinary records note Gray interrupted the class during a lesson, where two females demonstrated on video how to use sensitive techniques when searching transgender prisoners. Class instructors were "shocked" and "visibly upset" by Gray's conduct, and state records show that a female administrative assistant who attended the February 2018 training told investigators she felt "trapped."

As a result of the incident, the DOC fired Gray for sexual harassment in October 2018.

But his termination wouldn't last long.

RESCINDED DISCIPLINE AND ONE 'LAST CHANCE'

Gray's union, Teamsters Local 117, filed multiple grievances on his behalf – appealing his 2018 unpaid suspension and his termination for sexual harassment, according to Gray's disciplinary records.

As a union member, Gray's case would typically be reviewed by a neutral arbitrator with authority to make a legally-binding and final decision.

But “to avoid the uncertainty of the outcome of arbitration,” a DOC spokesperson said the state chose to resolve the union disputes by negotiating a settlement agreement with Teamsters Local 117.

Under the “last chance” agreement, signed the month after the state fired Gray, prison leaders agreed to rescind his termination and give Gray his job back. The DOC also committed to wiping from his file the 2017 reprimand for racism that originated with complaints from Seward and two other employees.

“After doing what was right and speaking up to stop these kind of things and having it ignored – having it disappear basically...you lose hope of having a healthy, decent work environment,” Seward said.

The last chance settlement agreement was scheduled to remain in effect for two years. It required Gray to complete a 15-day suspension before returning to his prison job. It also required him to refrain from engaging in future misconduct.

“The parties agreed that upon proof of any further inappropriate conduct by Gray towards others, DOC would terminate Gray, without the level of discipline being challenged by Gray or the union,” Toby Hatley, a DOC spokesperson, wrote in a statement.

A NEW CHANCE IN FORKS

Before he returned to his job at the Clallam Bay Corrections Center in late 2018, Gray applied for another job as a corrections officer at the Forks Correctional Facility.

City records show the small jail was in need of an “emergency hire” because of staffing shortages.

“We are currently down two positions,” Forks Police Chief Mike Rowley wrote in a memo to Forks Mayor Tim Fletcher in October 2018. “With the possibility of an injury putting staff in a grave overtime situation or danger, I would like to expedite the process of hiring.”

Prior to hiring Gray as a jail guard at \$19.38 an hour in April 2019, the city of Forks conducted a background check, a polygraph examination and a psychological examination, according to Gray's final offer of employment letter from the city.

During the background check process in March 2018, Rowley reviewed Gray's DOC personnel file, according to a DOC record containing a list of the people who accessed the guard's information.

Gray's personnel file, reviewed by KING 5, includes details of his extensive history on the job – with records dating back to the late 90s when he first became a state employee. It contains Gray's training records, letters of commendation and union grievances, in addition to copies of numerous complaints, prison investigations and disciplinary measures taken against him.

“It's inconceivable that a leader could be looking at a record like this and say, ‘That's the guy for my taxpayers. That's the guy who I want to place with other men and women who serve and for me to expose to the citizens of Forks,’” said Sarah Prescott, a Michigan-based civil rights and employment law attorney who specializes in cases involving prison misconduct. “It's just terrifying and appalling.”

It's not clear if the city of Forks reviewed the complete personnel file or if city officials were aware that Gray had been terminated for sexual harassment when he applied for the job.

Rowley and Forks City Attorney-Planner Rod Fleck did not respond to questions about Gray's employment, the city's hiring process or its policies pertaining to sexual misconduct.

Megan Coluccio, a Seattle-based attorney representing the city and some of its leaders in a federal lawsuit related to John Gray's misconduct, also did not respond to questions.

"The City does not comment on pending litigation," Coluccio wrote in an e-mail.

'I WAS AT THE MERCY OF HIM'

After getting a new job as a Forks jail guard in the spring of 2019, Gray resigned from his full-time job at the Clallam Bay prison.

Instead, he stayed on as an on-call prison guard, where he continued to work "sporadic and intermittent" shifts, according to a DOC spokesperson.

During his eight months of employment at the Forks jail, law enforcement and court records show Gray went on to sexually assault Morgan Lee and three other female inmates.

"It's humiliating. It's violating. It's damaging. It hurts," Lee said of her former jail guard's actions. "In just a few seconds, he took a lot from me."

Lee met Gray on her ride to jail in September 2019. He was the one tasked with transporting her on an hours-long drive from Mason County to the Forks Correctional Facility. She was sentenced to do time in the jail because she failed to complete court-mandated community service following a misdemeanor.

During the transport, as Lee's hands and legs were in shackles, Gray reached under her skirt while they were stopped at a gas station, and he groped her, according to law enforcement records and her own account of Gray's actions.

"He forced this on me. He did this with me completely helpless, in shackles," she said. "I was at the mercy of him – powerless to do anything, and I think that's how he preferred it"

Gray's sex crimes involving the other three women happened while they were locked up inside the Forks jail between the summer and fall of 2019. According to law enforcement records, Gray provided bail money to two of the women after he sexually assaulted them.

The details of the incidents that led to Gray's criminal case wouldn't become public until months after his city employment ended.

But Gray's unusual behavior during the night shift caught the attention of a coworker during his first few months on the job. The coworker, a Forks police officer, reported he saw the guard where he didn't belong – in the hallway with a female inmate, who "looked very uncomfortable" and had a "deer in the headlights look" when she was spotted with the jail guard, according to law enforcement records.

Gray's supervisor at the time, Sgt. Ed Klahn, documented the incident in an August 2019 observation report about the guard's work performance. But Klahn admitted later to a Jefferson County Sheriff's Office deputy who investigated Gray's criminal case that he let the incident slide.

"I did just kind of sweep it under the carpet because I thought he was such a hard worker," Klahn said to the deputy in a recorded interview. "I just thought he just put himself in a bad situation trying to get the job done, so I counseled."

In November 2019 – eight months into Gray’s employment as a Forks jail guard, a fifth woman tearfully reported to police officers that she was a victim of sexual harassment. The inmate, Kimberly Bender, told officers that Gray stalked her in her cell at night – whispering lewd and sexual comments while she was incarcerated over the course of several months.

Investigators who interviewed Bender believed her story and cited multiple reasons for why they thought she was “telling the truth.” But at the conclusion of a swift internal review, Rowley said they were “unable to substantiate” her allegations, even as they fired the jail guard during the investigation.

Forks leaders cited Gray's probationary employment as a reason for the termination.

Bender ended up taking her own life. Gray ended up taking his old job back.

BACKED BY THE UNION

Hundreds of internal emails between Gray, his union representative and DOC officials show Teamsters Local 117 consistently protected him throughout the course of his career as a correctional officer, including after he was fired from the city of Forks.

Following his termination, Gray asked the Clallam Bay prison superintendent to bring him back on as a full-time guard. His union representative successfully convinced prison officials to extend the terms of his “last chance” agreement and give Gray another shot.

“Unions have a lot of opportunity to affect either justice or injustice in these scenarios, and they carry a lot of weight,” said Prescott, the civil rights attorney. “But I think a lot of this has to go to the people who could have stopped it – who could have said, ‘Enough, we’re not doing this.’”

When Gray took his old job back in April 2020, he returned to the prison with a clean slate. An email exchange between Gray’s union representative and a DOC employee shows prison management agreed to allow Gray to “start fresh” with no mention in performance evaluations of his previous prison discipline.

He also received a raise of nearly \$300 a month, according to a state record of his salary. DOC officials said his salary increase was part of a standard raise that all corrections officers received under the terms of their 2019 collective bargaining agreement.

Hatley, the DOC spokesperson, said there was “no basis” for prison officials to conduct a background check when they offered Gray another full-time job at Clallam Bay because the corrections officer “never left DOC employment” when he went to work at the Forks jail.

“DOC was not informed of any unprofessional or inappropriate behaviors towards individuals in the custody of the City of Forks when Gray requested to return to work a regular, full-time schedule at DOC,” Hatley wrote

Paul Zilly, a Teamsters Local 117 spokesperson, also explained union officials weren’t clued in to what happened in Forks.

“When Gray returned to full-time employment at the DOC after working at the Forks jail, we had no knowledge of the deplorable acts he was engaged in while he was employed there,” Zilly wrote in a statement.

Teamsters Local 117 declined an interview request and did not respond to questions about the union's representation of Gray.

CONVICTED FOR HIS CRIMES

In May 2020, the month after Gray returned to the Clallam Bay prison, his crimes in Forks caught up with him.

	<p>Sheriff deputies arrested him at work, and he was later charged and convicted of the sex crimes that forever changed the lives of his victims.</p> <p>The DOC terminated Gray a final time in January 2021, about a month after he pleaded guilty to two felony and two misdemeanor counts of custodial sexual misconduct.</p> <p>Then, in February 2021, a Clallam County court judge sentenced Gray to return to prison, not as a guard but as a prisoner.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Nigeria vows 'no mercy' for gunmen
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/nigeria-news-violence-plateau-village-attacks-gunmen-bandits-buhari/
GIST	<p>Johannesburg — Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari has vowed there will be "no mercy" for gunmen who killed more than 150 people in a series of weekend attacks in the country's north. In some of the worst violence Nigeria has seen this year, armed gunmen on motorcycles raided and razed a group of villages in the northern Plateau state, highlighting growing insecurity in the region.</p> <p>Villagers have been scouring bushes and other terrain for missing loved ones since the Sunday attacks. Many locals were shot trying to flee from the gunmen. Residents have said women and children were abducted by the attackers, but the number of those abducted remained unclear.</p> <p>More than 80 victims were buried earlier this week in mass funeral services in the four villages, as additional security forces arrived in the area.</p> <p>In a statement issued by his spokesman, President Buhari urged residents to "expose the perpetrators of such incidents, their sponsors and those who encourage such criminals who carry out these dastardly acts of murder, so that the law will take its course."</p> <p>Eyewitnesses said more than 100 houses were set alight, as well as a cell phone tower. Telephone service was already unreliable in the remote region, making it difficult for residents to call police for help, but also for news of the attacks to get out.</p> <p>Analysts say criminal gangs, known in Nigeria as bandits, from the bordering northwest Kaduna state have become more brazen in recent years. The region has seen clashes between local farmers and herders over access to water and land for years, which evolved into criminal gangs that carry out revenge killings.</p> <p>On March 28, bandits targeted a train travelling from Abuja to Kaduna state, blowing up the tracks, killing eight people and kidnapping dozens more. Several videos of the hostages have been released, showing them in a forest surrounded by armed men, pleading to the camera for the government to help.</p> <p>More than a dozen soldiers were killed last week by gunmen who attacked an army base in Kaduna state.</p> <p>Nigerian security forces say they're stretched too thin as they battle a 12-year jihadist insurgency by the Boko Haram extremist group and the regional ISIS affiliate in the northeast of the country. That conflict has driven more than 2 million people from their homes and left more than 40,000 dead since 2009.</p> <p>The Northern Elders Forum, a council of local leaders, issued a statement on Tuesday calling on Buhari to resign immediately, arguing that he's failed to deal with killings, kidnappings, and general insecurity in the country during his seven years in office.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 NY Lt. Gov. arrested; corruption probe
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/ny-lt-gov-benjamin-arrested-campaign-donation-scheme-84031410
GIST	ALBANY, N.Y. -- New York Lt. Gov. Brian Benjamin was arrested Tuesday in a federal corruption investigation, prompting calls for his resignation and igniting a political crisis for Gov. Kathy Hochul

seven months after she selected Benjamin as a partner to make a fresh start in an office already rocked by scandal.

Benjamin, a Democrat, was accused in an indictment of participating in a scheme to obtain campaign contributions from a real estate developer in exchange for Benjamin's agreement to use his influence as a state senator to get a \$50,000 grant of state funds for a nonprofit organization the developer controlled.

Facing charges including bribery, fraud, conspiracy and falsification of records, Benjamin pleaded not guilty Tuesday at an initial appearance in Manhattan federal court. He was released and bail was set at \$250,000. The terms of his release call for his travel to be restricted and bar him from returning to the state capitol in Albany.

Benjamin and his lawyer did not comment as they left the courthouse Tuesday afternoon. The governor remained conspicuously quiet about the arrest for most of Tuesday despite growing calls for the lieutenant governor to step down. Hochul said Tuesday at a New York City news conference regarding a shooting on the subway that she would speak about Benjamin later in the day. She said she had not had a chance to speak to him yet.

Hochul in September plucked Benjamin, then a state lawmaker, to serve as second-in-command when she became governor, taking over for Democrat Andrew Cuomo. Cuomo resigned amid allegations he sexually harassed 11 women, which he denied.

Hochul, also a Democrat, was Cuomo's lieutenant governor. She is now running in this year's election to remain governor, with Benjamin as a running mate.

Two months after Benjamin became lieutenant governor, a real estate developer who steered campaign contributions toward Benjamin's failed bid for New York City comptroller was indicted. Federal authorities accused Gerald Migdol of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, wire fraud, and aggravated identity theft in illegally giving donations to Benjamin's campaign.

The indictment said Benjamin, formerly a state senator from Harlem, and others acting at his direction or on his behalf engaged in a series of lies and deceptions to cover up the scheme that stretched from 2019 to 2021.

They falsified campaign donor forms, misled municipal regulators and provided false information in vetting forms Benjamin submitted while he was being considered to be appointed as lieutenant governor, the indictment said.

Prosecutors had previously not made any accusations against Benjamin. His campaign said at the time of Migdol's arrest that it had forfeited any improper donations as soon as they were discovered.

More recently, reports came out saying subpoenas had been issued to Benjamin regarding the financial issues before Hochul picked him as lieutenant governor.

Before Benjamin's arrest, Hochul had defended him, saying last week she had the "utmost confidence" in him. She said on Monday that she didn't know of the subpoenas when she tapped Benjamin to be her No. 2.

State leaders from both major parties have called on Benjamin to resign, including at least 10 of Benjamin's fellow Democrats in the Legislature by Tuesday afternoon.

Spokespeople for Hochul, Senate Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie didn't immediately provide comment Tuesday when asked if Benjamin should resign.

If Benjamin resigns, he would still likely appear on the ballot for the 2022 gubernatorial Democratic primary even if Hochul picks a new lieutenant governor, according to state elections law.

	<p>Benjamin was the state's second Black lieutenant governor. During his state Legislature career, he emphasized criminal justice reform and affordable housing. His district included most of central Harlem, where he was born and raised by Caribbean immigrant parents.</p> <p>The scandal is the latest in a long history of lawmakers and other Albany leaders who've been engulfed in allegations of wrongdoing.</p> <p>Cuomo's resignation as governor came not only amid allegations of sexual harassment but that his administration misrepresented the number of New Yorkers who died in nursing homes from COVID-19.</p> <p>In 2008, then-Gov. Eliot Spitzer resigned amid a prostitution investigation.</p> <p>Former New York Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, one of the most powerful figures in state government, resigned in 2015 after he was arrested on federal corruption charges.</p> <p>Former Republican state Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, who for a time shared power with Silver, was convicted of extortion, wire fraud and bribery.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 L.A. street gangs behind brazen holdups
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/police-la-street-gangs-brazen-follow-home-holdups-84048310
GIST	<p>LOS ANGELES -- Los Angeles street gangs are behind brazen robberies in which people are followed home from fancy locations, stripped of a fortune in jewelry or other goods and sometimes shot, police said Tuesday.</p> <p>At least 17 gangs, most of them based in South Los Angeles, had independently staged robberies, sometimes using spotters to target people wearing high-end watches or driving expensive cars, Capt. Jonathan Tippet, who spearheads an LAPD "follow-home robbery" task force, told the city Police Commission.</p> <p>As many as five carloads of people have followed home some targets, swarming them to steal watches, handbags or cars before they have much of a chance to resist, Tippet said.</p> <p>In one case, a man was arrested this month on suspicion of robbing a victim of two watches worth an estimated \$600,000.</p> <p>"We have seen countless individuals traumatized by having a gun pointed at them," Tippet said. "Many others are dealing with the trauma and injuries from being tackled, kicked, beaten, punched and are pistol-whipped to the head."</p> <p>Tippet said there were 165 such holdups last year and 56 so far this year, including five in the past two days. Thirteen victims were shot, including two people who died. Fifty robberies took place in the LAPD's Hollywood Division and nearly as many in the Wilshire Division, along with many in an area that includes the downtown Jewelry District.</p> <p>Such attacks were "almost unheard of" before last year, Tippet said.</p> <p>"In my 34 years in the LAPD, I have never seen this type of criminal behavior" in such large, coordinated groups, Tippet said.</p> <p>In one holdup Monday, a woman stopped at a light had her car window smashed and when she tried to run off, the robbers struck her with their car, according to video released by police. The thieves then got out and snatched the woman's watch, which she had thrown into the street.</p>

	<p>Video of two recent holdups supplied by the LAPD show an “outrageous display of arrogance on the part of these criminals, to think that they can just run amok in our city and terrorize our citizens,” Police Commission President William Briggs said.</p> <p>The task force has made several dozen arrests for robbery, weapons crimes and attempted murder along with four arrests on suspicion of murder, Tippet said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Houston: gun battle teen’s birthday party
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/50-shots-fired-fight-breaks-airbnb-rental-teens/story?id=84030769
GIST	<p>A 23-second running gun battle in which 30 to 50 shots were fired during a teen's birthday party at a rented Airbnb house in a suburb of Houston left one person wounded and police searching for suspects, authorities said.</p> <p>Ring doorbell camera footage from a home near the party house was obtained by ABC station KTRK in Houston and captured the chaotic scene of multiple people running down a residential street and diving behind parked cars for cover as the gun violence unfolded.</p> <p>"There were so many shots, I just can't believe more weren't wounded, killed, more damage," a woman who lives near the Airbnb rental and witnessed the incident after arriving home with her daughter told KTRK. "You know it could have been so much worse."</p> <p>Investigator Robert Gonzales of the Brazoria County Sheriff's Office said the shooting happened Saturday night in Manville, about 24 miles south of Houston. He said one teenager was shot in the foot.</p> <p>Gonzales said the shooting erupted when a fight broke at a 16th birthday party that was being held at the rented Airbnb house.</p> <p>No arrests were reported as of Tuesday morning.</p> <p>"We're attempting to locate and get more information from the public," Gonzales said.</p> <p>Authorities said at least three guns were involved in the shooting, which left numerous cars in the neighborhood pocked with bullet holes and at least one window of a neighboring home shattered.</p> <p>Airbnb said in a statement that it has removed the home from its platform and suspended the person who rented it pending its own investigation.</p> <p>"Airbnb bans parties, and we condemn this senseless gun violence," the company said in its statement. "We have reached out to the Brazoria County Sheriff's Office and stand ready to support their investigation."</p> <p>The Texas shooting happened on the same day as another shooting at an Airbnb rental house in the Sacramento, Calif., suburb of Elk Grove left an 18-year-old man dead, according to the Elk Grove Police Department. No arrests have been made.</p> <p>A preliminary investigation found that the Airbnb rental was being used for a party at the time of the fatal shooting in Elk Grove, police said in a statement. Detectives suspect there were 10 to 15 people at the house party but most were gone when officers arrived and found the victim inside the house, according to the statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Suspect previous FBI Guardian lead
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SOURCE	https://www.newsweek.com/brooklyn-shooting-live-updates-multiple-people-shot-undetected-device-found-1697272?utm_source=PushnamiMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=automatic&UTM=1649803990399&subscriberId=614e18b67aeb51cecbe2d56a#live-blog-14311
GIST	<p>The man suspected in the Brooklyn subway shooting Tuesday is known to the FBI, a federal law enforcement officer told <i>Newsweek's</i> Naveed Jamali.</p> <p>The suspect, who has yet to be identified, was a previous FBI Guardian Lead out of New Mexico. He was interviewed multiple times by the FBI and eventually cleared in 2019, the officer said.</p> <p>"The Guardian Program, managed by the FBI, provides a proven methodology for reporting, sharing, tracking, and mitigating a large volume of counterterrorism-based incidents," the FBI website says.</p> <p>Tuesday's attack; however, cannot be classified as terrorism until a motive is determined, the officer said.</p> <p>#BREAKING #brooklynsubway <i>FED LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER TO ME: "Subject was a previous FBI Guardian Lead out of NM, interviewed multiple times and eventually closed out in 2019." Allegedly this means the suspect was the subject of FBI inv and known to them.</i> — Naveed Jamali (@NaveedAJamali) April 12, 2022</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Nigeria: armed gang kills 100 in north
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/business-nigeria-africa-dd42365974da5e66aacfc7a461869b50
GIST	<p>ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — An armed gang has killed more than 100 people in a remote part of northern Nigeria, survivors and local authorities said on Tuesday.</p> <p>The attackers targeted four villages in the Kanam area of Plateau State, the most recent in a series of violent attacks in Nigeria's north.</p> <p>Such attacks in Nigeria's northern region have become frequent, especially between Fulani Muslims who are mostly cattle herders and Christian communities from the Hausa and other ethnic groups who are mainly farmers.</p> <p>The conflict over access to land and water has further worsened the sectarian division between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation with its 206 million people deeply divided along religious lines.</p> <p>In this recent attack, the assailants arrived Sunday afternoon, ransacking houses and shooting at residents, according to Alpha Sambo, a survivor and Kanam youth leader who is helping those displaced and injured.</p> <p>"The people that have been killed are more than 100," he told The Associated Press on Tuesday. Other witnesses say as many as 130 died and many have been injured and displaced.</p> <p>The police and the state government confirmed the attacks but did not give details on the cause or number of casualties. Authorities in Nigeria have in the past been accused of withholding information about death tolls in such killings.</p> <p>On social media, videos viewed by AP appeared to show razed houses and bodies wrapped in mats and bags in mass graves. Many were buried even before their loved ones heard of their demise, residents said.</p> <p>While there was no immediate claim of responsibility for the latest violence, residents said it was carried out by the herdsman.</p> <p>The assailants "were well-armed" with AK-47 rifles and machetes and arrived on dozens of motorcycles each carrying up to three men, said youth leader Sambo.</p>

	<p>Two days after the attack, the Kanam area is still tense and calm has not been fully restored, Dayyabu Yusuf Garga, chairman of the Kanam local government authority, said.</p> <p>Plateau State Governor Simon Bako Lalong directed security forces to restore peace and order in the affected villages and vowed “to make it difficult for terrorists and other criminals to set their bases in any part of the state,” according to a government statement.</p> <p>The State Security Council has adopted “far-reaching measures to strengthen all security measures,” Lalong said, but similar commitments made in the past have not succeeded in improving security in the area, say residents.</p> <p>President Muhammadu Buhari was elected in 2015 on promises that he would improve Nigeria’s security and is facing growing pressure to curb the killings as he reaches the end of his second and final four-year term as the country’s leader.</p> <p>The West African nation continues to grapple with security challenges in other parts of the country. A decade-long insurgency in Nigeria’s northeast by the Islamic extremist rebels of Boko Haram and violence by armed groups in the northwest have led to the deaths of thousands more.</p> <p>Nigerian security forces are often outnumbered and outgunned by the armed groups in those volatile areas, say security analysts, creating a serious challenge to Nigeria’s quest for peace and stability.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 Minn. mosque bombers sentenced to prison
SOURCE	https://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2022/04/12/michael-mcwhorter-gets-16-years-in-prison-for-2017-dar-al-farooq-mosque-bombing/
GIST	<p>ST. PAUL, Minn. (WCCO) — Two men who admitted to bombing a Bloomington mosque almost five years ago will spend less time in prison for their crimes than sentencing guidelines call for, following pleas for leniency from the Muslim community.</p> <p>U.S. District Judge Donovan Frank on Tuesday sentenced Michael McWhorter, 33, and Joe Morris, 26, to 16 years and 14 years after they pled guilty to several charges, including federal civil rights violations, in connection to the attack on Dar al-Farooq in August 2017. No one was physically injured in the bombing, but it traumatized Muslims in the Twin Cities.</p> <p>They could’ve spent much more time behind bars — the mandatory minimum is 35 years — but prosecutors, defense attorneys and faith leaders, including worshippers at Dar al-Farooq asked for clemency.</p> <p>“In a profound act of healing for our community in living with our faith, our community has chosen to forgive them,” said Imam Asad Zaman, executive director of the Muslim American Society of Minnesota. “We are able despite our pain to see the humanity of our fellow human beings and to understand their mitigating circumstances which is why we asked the judge for leniency.”</p> <p>Prosecutors said that both men cooperated with the federal government and helped with the prosecution and conviction of Emily Hari, the leader of the anti-government militia group who recruited McWhorter and Morris and was the “mastermind” of the plot. She was sentenced to 53 years in September.</p> <p>Assistant U.S. Attorney Allison Ethen called McWhorter a “lynch pin” in Hari’s case and called for a 50% reduction from sentencing guidelines for both men, an “incredibly rare” ask from federal prosecutors, she said.</p> <p>McWhorter and Morris both expressed remorse for their actions in court Tuesday, and Muslim faith leaders said they felt that regret.</p>

Return to Top	<p>“If I could go back in time and take it back, I would,” McWhorter said.</p> <p>Hari, McWhorter and Morris arrived at Dar al-Farooq in the early morning hours of August 5, 2017, and Morris broke the window of the imam’s office and threw gasoline and diesel fuel inside, according to court documents. McWhorter then lit a pipe bomb that exploded, causing extensive fire damage.</p> <p>During a press conference Tuesday, members of Dar al-Farooq stood in that very room, calling on the greater Minnesota community to show compassion and forgive McWhorter and Morris.</p> <p>“Today we practiced restorative justice, not punitive justice,” said Mohamed Omar, who is executive director of the Dar al-Farooq.</p> <p>There were two dozen who gave victim impact statements to the court during Hari’s hearing, seeking the maximum sentence in her case — a stark contrast from pleas for leniency in cases of McWhorter and Morris.</p> <p>Zaman said Muslims emotionally harmed by the attack see a distinction between Hari, whom he described as the “evil genius” behind the ambush, and the other defendants who followed Hari’s lead.</p> <p>“The nation of America is currently divided. There is hate-mongering going on, so a hateful person like Hari can take two people who are not necessarily part of this hate river and they can get swept up in it as they did in this case,” said Zaman. “It’s important for us to distinguish these nuances in the reality that occurred.”</p>
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